THE LIFE AND WORKS OF THOMAS PAINE

VOL. IX

THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

Patriots' Edition

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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From the marble bust in Independence Hall, Philadelphia.

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Patriots' Edition

Edited by
William M. Van der Weyde

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THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

A Discourse at the Society of Theophilanthropists, Paris

IN January, 1797, Thomas Paine, with five families, founded in Paris the church of Theophilanthropy—a word, as he stated in a letter to Erskine, compounded of three Greek words signifying God, Love and Man. This discourse was read by Paine at the inauguration of the Society. It appears, however, to be a composition of early life, with a few paragraphs added. The word "infidelity" in the first paragraph has a meaning quite different from the definition in "The Age of Reason": "Infidelity does not consist in believing or disbelieving; it consists in pretending to believe what one does not believe."

Theophilanthropy made considerable headway in France for five or six years, provoking the wrath of the Catholic Church at the sight of this Ethical Society sharing its edifices, even Notre Dame. Eventually Napoleon forbade its meetings in the established churches, and the Society languished.

RELIGION has two principal enemies, fanaticism and infidelity, or that which is called atheism. The first requires to be combated by reason and morality, the other by natural philosophy.

The existence of a God is the first dogma of the Theophilanthropists. It is upon this subject that I solicit your attention; for though it has been often treated of, and that most sublimely, the subject is inexhaustible; and there will always remain something to be said that has not been before advanced. I go therefore to open the subject, and to crave your attention to the end.

The universe is the bible of a true Theophilanthropist. It is there that he reads of God. It is there that the proofs of His existence are to be sought and to be found. As to written or printed books, by whatever name they are called, they are the works of man's hands, and carry no evidence in themselves that God is the Author of any of them. It must be in something that man could not make that we must seek evidence for our belief, and that something is the universe, the true Bible—the inimitable work of God.

Contemplating the universe, the whole system of Creation, in this point of light, we shall discover, that all that which is call natural philosophy is properly a divine study. It is the study of God through His works. It is the best study, by which we can arrive at a knowledge of His existence, and the only one by which we can gain a glimpse of His perfection.

Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible WHOLE is governed. Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that

abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what GOD is? Search not written or printed books, but the Scripture called the *creation.*

It has been the error of the schools to teach astronomy and all the other sciences and subjects of natural philosophy as accomplishments only; whereas they should be taught theologically, or with reference to the *Being* who is the Author of them: for all the principles of science are of divine origin. Man cannot make, or invent, or contrive principles; he can only discover them, and he ought to look through the discovery to the Author.

When we examine an extraordinary piece of machinery, an astonishing pile of architecture, a well executed statue, or a highly finished painting where life and action are imitated, and habit only prevents our mistaking a surface of light and shade for cubical solidity, our ideas are naturally led to think of the extensive genius and talents of the artist.

When we study the elements of geometry, we think of Euclid. When we speak of gravitation, we think of Newton. How then is it that when we study the works of God in the creation we stop short, and do not think of GOD? It is from the error of the schools in having taught those subjects as accomplishments

only, and thereby separated the study of them from the *Being* who is the Author of them.

The schools have made the study of theology to consist in the study of opinions in written or printed books; whereas theology should be studied in the works or books of the Creation. The study of theology in books of opinions has often produced fanaticism, rancor and cruelty of temper; and from hence have proceeded the numerous persecutions, the fanatical quarrels, the religious burnings and massacres, that have desolated Europe.

But the study of theology in the works of the creation produces a direct contrary effect. The mind becomes at once enlightened and serene, a copy of the scene it beholds: information and adoration go hand in hand; and all the social faculties become enlarged.

The evil that has resulted from the error of the schools in teaching natural philosophy as an accomplishment only has been that of generating in the pupils a species of atheism. Instead of looking through the works of creation to the Creator himself, they stop short and employ the knowledge they acquire to create doubts of His existence. They labor with studied ingenuity to ascribe everything they behold to innate properties of matter, and jump over all the rest by saying that matter is eternal.

Let us examine this subject; it is worth examining; for if we examine it through all its cases, the result will be that the existence of a SUPERIOR CAUSE, or that which man calls GOD, will be discoverable by philosophical principles.

In the first place, admitting matter to have properties, as we see it has, the question still remains, how came matter by those properties? To this they will answer that matter possessed those properties eternally. This is not solution, but assertion; and to deny it is equally as impossible of proof as to assert it.

It is then necessary to go further; and therefore I say—if there exist a circumstance that is *not* a property of matter, and without which the universe, or to speak in a limited degree, the solar system composed of planets and a sun, could not exist a moment, all the arguments of atheism, drawn from properties of matter, and applied to account for the universe, will be overthrown, and the existence of a superior cause, or that which man calls God, becomes discoverable, as is before said, by natural philosophy.

I go now to show that such a circumstance exists, and what it is.

The universe is composed of matter, and, as a system, is sustained by motion. Motion is *not a prop-*

erty of matter, and without this motion, the solar system could not exist. Were motion a property of matter, that undiscovered and undiscoverable thing called perpetual motion would establish itself.

It is because motion is not a property of matter, that perpetual motion is an impossibility in the hand of every being but that of the Creator of motion. When the pretenders to atheism can produce perpetual motion, and not till then, they may expect to be credited.

The natural state of matter, as to place, is a state of rest. Motion, or change of place, is the effect of an external cause acting upon matter. As to that faculty of matter that is called gravitation, it is the influence which two or more bodies have reciprocally on each other to unite and be at rest. Everything which has hitherto been discovered, with respect to the motion of the planets in the system, relates only to the laws by which motion acts, and not to the cause of motion.

Gravitation, so far from being the cause of motion to the planets that compose the solar system, would be the destruction of the solar system were revolutionary motion to cease; for as the action of spinning upholds a top, the revolutionary motion upholds the planets in their orbits, and prevents them from gravi-

tating and forming one mass with the sun. In one sense of the word, philosophy knows, and atheism says, that matter is in perpetual motion.

But the motion here meant refers to the *state* of matter, and that only on the surface of the earth. It is either decomposition, which is continually destroying the form of bodies of matter, or recomposition, which renews that matter in the same or another form, as the decomposition of animal or vegetable substances enters into the composition of other bodies.

But the motion that upholds the solar system is of an entire different kind, and is not a property of matter. It operates also to an entire different effect. It operates to *perpetual preservation*, and to prevent *any change* in the state of the system.

Giving then to matter all the properties which philosophy knows it has, or all that atheism ascribes to it, and can prove, and even supposing matter to be eternal, it will not account for the system of the universe, or of the solar system, because it will not account for motion, and it is motion that preserves it.

When, therefore, we discover a circumstance of such immense importance that without it the universe could not exist, and for which neither matter, nor any nor all the properties can account, we are by necessity forced into the rational conformable belief

of the existence of a cause superior to matter, and that cause man calls GOD.

As to that which is called nature, it is no other than the laws by which motion and action of every kind, with respect to unintelligible matter, are regulated. And when we speak of looking through nature up to nature's God, we speak philosophically the same rational language as when we speak of looking through human laws up to the Power that ordained them.

God is the power of first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon.

But infidelity, by ascribing every phenomenon to properties of matter, conceives a system for which it cannot account, and yet it pretends to demonstration. It reasons from what it sees on the surface of the earth, but it does not carry itself on the solar system existing by motion.

It sees upon the surface a perpetual decomposition and recomposition of matter. It sees that an oak produces an acorn, an acorn an oak, a bird an egg, an egg a bird, and so on. In things of this kind it sees something which it calls a natural cause, but none of the causes it sees is the cause of that motion which preserves the solar system.

Let us contemplate this wonderful and stupendous system consisting of matter, and existing by motion.

It is not matter in a state of rest, nor in a state of decomposition or recomposition. It is matter systematized in perpetual orbicular or circular motion. As a system that motion is the life of it: as animation is life to an animal body, deprive the system of motion and, as a system, it must expire.

Who then breathed into the system the life of motion? What power impelled the planets to move, since motion is not a property of the matter of which they are composed? If we contemplate the immense velocity of this motion, our wonder becomes increased, and our adoration enlarges itself in the same proportion.

To instance only one of the planets, that of the earth we inhabit, its distance from the sun, the center of the orbits of all the planets, is, according to observations of the transit of the planet Venus, about one hundred million miles; consequently, the diameter of the orbit, or circle in which the earth moves round the sun, is double that distance; and the measure of the circumference of the orbit, taken as three times its diameter, is six hundred million miles. The earth performs this voyage in three hundred and sixty-five days and some hours, and consequently moves at the rate of more than one million six hundred thousand miles every twenty-four hours.

Where will infidelity, where will atheism, find cause for this astonishing velocity of motion, never ceasing, never varying, and which is the preservation of the earth in its orbit? It is not by reasoning from an acorn to an oak, from an egg to a bird, or from any change in the state of matter on the surface of the earth, that this can be accounted for.

Its cause is not to be found in matter, nor in anything we call nature. The atheist who affects to reason, and the fanatic who rejects reason, plunge themselves alike into inextricable difficulties.

The one perverts the sublime and enlightening study of natural philosophy into a deformity of absurdities by not reasoning to the end. The other loses himself in the obscurity of metaphysical theories, and dishonors the Creator by treating the study of His works with contempt. The one is a half-rational of whom there is some hope, the other a visionary to whom we must be charitable.

When at first thought we think of a Creator, our ideas appear to us undefined and confused; but if we reason philosophically, those ideas can be easily arranged and simplified. *It is a Being whose power is equal to His will.*

Observe the nature of the will of man. It is of an infinite quality. We cannot conceive the possibility

of limits to the will. Observe, on the other hand, how exceedingly limited is his power of acting compared with the nature of his will. Suppose the power equal to the will, and man would be a God. He would will himself eternal, and be so. He could will a creation, and could make it.

In this progressive reasoning, we see in the nature of the will of man half of that which we conceive in thinking of God; add the other half, and we have the whole idea of a Being who could make the universe, and sustain it by perpetual motion; because He could create that motion.

We know nothing of the capacity of the will of animals, but we know a great deal of the difference of their powers. For example, how numerous are the degrees, and how immense is the difference of power, from a mite to a man.

Since then everything we see below us shows a progression of power, where is the difficulty in supposing that there is, at the *summit of all things*, a Being in whom an infinity of power unites with the infinity of the will? When this simple idea presents itself to our mind, we have the idea of a perfect Being that man calls God.

It is comfortable to live under the belief of the existence of an infinite protecting power; and it is

an addition to that comfort to know that such a belief is not a mere conceit of the imagination, as many of the theories that are called religious are; nor a belief founded only on tradition or received opinion; but is a belief deducible by the action of reason upon the things that compose the system of the universe; a belief arising out of visible facts. So demonstrable is the truth of this belief that if no such belief had existed, the persons who now controvert it would have been the persons who would have produced and propagated it; because by beginning to reason they would have been led to reason progressively to the end, and thereby have discovered that matter and the properties it has will not account for the system of the universe, and that there must necessarily be a superior cause.

It was the excess to which imaginary systems of religion had been carried, and the intolerance, persecutions, burnings and massacres they occasioned, that first induced certain persons to propagate infidelity; thinking, that upon the whole it was better not to believe at all than to believe a multitude of things and complicated creeds that occasioned so much mischief in the world.

But those days are past, persecution has ceased, and the antidote then set up against it has no longer

even the shadow of apology. We profess, and we proclaim in peace, the pure, unmixed, comfortable and rational belief of a God as manifested to us in the universe. We do this without any apprehension of that belief being made a cause of persecution as other beliefs have been, or of suffering persecution ourselves.* To God, and not to man, are all men to account for their belief.

It has been well observed, at the first institution of this Society, that the dogmas it professes to believe are from the commencement of the world; that they are not novelties, but are confessedly the basis of all systems of religion, however numerous and contradictory they may be.

All men in the outset of the religion they profess are Theophilanthropists. It is impossible to form any system of religion without building upon those principles, and therefore they are not sectarian principles, unless we suppose a sect composed of all the world.

I have said in the course of this discourse that the study of natural philosophy is a divine study, because it is the study of the works of God in the creation. If we consider theology upon this ground, what an

* Nevertheless, a few years later Napoleon Bonaparte suppressed the Theophilanthropist Societies.—*Editor.*

extensive field of improvement in things both divine and human opens itself before us!

All the principles of science are of divine origin. It was not man that invented the principles on which astronomy, and every branch of mathematics, are founded and studied. It was not man that gave properties to the circle and the triangle. Those principles are eternal and immutable.

We see in them the unchangeable nature of the Divinity. We see in them immortality, an immortality existing after the material figures that express those properties are dissolved in dust.

The Society is at present in its infancy, and its means are small; but I wish to hold in view the subject I allude to, and instead of teaching the philosophical branches of learning as ornamental accomplishments only, as they have hitherto been taught, to teach them in a manner that shall combine theological knowledge with scientific instruction.

To do this to the best advantage some instruments will be necessary, for the purpose of explanation, of which the Society is not yet possessed. But as the views of this Society extend to public good as well as to that of the individual, and as its principles can have no enemies, means may be devised to procure them.

If we unite to the present instruction a series of lectures on the ground I have mentioned, we shall, in the first place, render theology the most delightful and entertaining of all studies. In the next place we shall give scientific instruction to those who could not otherwise obtain it. The mechanic of every profession will there be taught the mathematical principles necessary to render him a proficient in his art; the cultivator will there see developed the principles of vegetation; while, at the same time, they will be led to see the hand of God in all these things.

WORSHIP AND CHURCH BELLS

A Letter to Camille Jordan

THIS pamphlet was published in both Paris and London in the summer of 1797, in reply to a Report made to the French Convention by M. Jordan, of the Council of Five Hundred, petitioning the restoration of certain Catholic privileges, especially the church bells, which was received with ridicule by the Convention. The manuscript was among the papers Paine bequeathed to Madame Bonneville, whose reconversion to the Catholic faith caused her to tamper with some passages and suppress others altogether.

Jordan was a royalist lawyer, who in 1793 took refuge in Switzerland and in England. Returning to France in 1796 he was elected for the Department of the Rhone to the Council of Five Hundred. Though professing loyalty to the Directory, he conspired against it, and in September, 1797, fled the country. In 1814 he was commissioned to welcome Louis XVIII in Paris, and received from him the award of nobility.

CITIZEN REPRESENTATIVE: As everything in your Report, relating to what you call worship, connects itself with the books called the Scriptures, I begin with a quotation therefrom. It may serve to give us some idea of the fanciful origin and fabrication of those books, II Chronicles xxxiv, 14, etc. "Hilkiah, the priest, *found* the book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And Hilkiah, the priest, said to Shaphan, the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord, and Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan, the scribe, told the

king (Josiah), saying, Hilkiah, the priest, hath given me a book."

This pretended finding was about a thousand years after the time that Moses is said to have lived. Before this pretended finding there was no such thing practised or known in the world as that which is called the Law of Moses.

This being the case, there is every apparent evidence that the books called the books of Moses (and which make the first part of what are called the Scriptures) are forgeries contrived between a priest and a limb of the law,* Hilkiah, and Shaphan the scribe, a thousand years after Moses is said to have been dead.

Thus much for the first part of the Bible. Every other part is marked with circumstances equally as suspicious. We ought therefore to be reverentially careful how we ascribe books *as His Word,* of which there is no evidence, and against which there is abundant evidence to the contrary, and every cause to suspect imposition.

In your Report you speak continually of something by the name of worship, and you confine your-

* It happens that Camille Jordan is a limb of the law.—*Author.*

self to speak of one kind only, as if there were but one, and that one was unquestionably true.

The modes of worship are as various as the sects are numerous; and amidst all this variety and multiplicity there is but one article of belief in which every religion in the world agrees. That article has universal sanction. It is the belief of a God, or what the Greeks described by the word *Theism*, and the Latins by that of *Deism*.

Upon this one article have been erected all the different superstructures of creeds and ceremonies continually warring with each other that now exist or ever existed. But the men most and best informed upon the subject of theology rest themselves upon this universal article, and hold all the various superstructures erected thereon to be at least doubtful, if not altogether artificial.

The intellectual part of religion is a private affair between every man and his Maker, and in which no third party has any right to interfere. The practical part consists in our doing good to each other. But since religion has been made into a trade, the practical part has been made to consist of ceremonies performed by men called priests; and the people have been amused with ceremonial shows, processions and bells.

By devices of this kind true religion has been banished; and such means have been found out to extract money even from the pockets of the poor, instead of contributing to their relief.

No man ought to make a living by religion. It is dishonest so to do. Religion is not an act that can be performed by proxy. One person cannot act religion for another. Every person must perform it for himself; and all that a priest can do is to take from him; he wants nothing but his money and then to riot in the spoil and laugh at his credulity.

The only people who, as a professional sect of Christians provide for the poor of their society, are people known by the name of Quakers. Those men have no priests. They assemble quietly in their places of meeting, and do not disturb their neighbors with shows and noise of bells. Religion does not unite itself to show and noise. True religion is without either. Where there is both there is no true religion.

The first object for inquiry in all cases, more especially in matters of religious concern, is TRUTH. We ought to inquire into the truth of whatever we are taught to believe, and it is certain that the books called the Scriptures stand in this respect in more than a doubtful predicament.

They have been held in existence, and in a sort of credit among the common class of people, by art, terror and persecution. They have little or no credit among the enlightened part, but they have been made the means of encumbering the world with a numerous priesthood, who have fattened on the labor of the people and consumed the sustenance that ought to be applied to the widows and the poor.

It is a want of feeling to talk of priests and bells while so many infants are perishing in the hospitals, and aged and infirm poor in the streets, from the want of necessaries. The abundance that France produces is sufficient for every want, if rightly applied; but priests and bells, like articles of luxury, ought to be the least articles of consideration.

We talk of religion. Let us talk of truth; for that which is not truth is not worthy of the name of religion.

We see different parts of the world overspread with different books, each of which, though contradictory to the other, is said by its partisans to be of divine origin, and is made a rule of faith and practise.

In countries under despotic governments, where inquiry is always forbidden, the people are condemned to believe as they have been taught by their

priests. This was for many centuries the case in France: but this link in the chain of slavery is happily broken by the Revolution; and, that it may never be riveted again, let us employ a part of the liberty we enjoy in scrutinizing into the truth.

Let us leave behind us some monument that we have made the cause and honor of our Creator an object of our care. If we have been imposed upon by the terrors of government and the artifice of priests in matters of religion, let us do justice to our Creator by examining into the case. His name is too sacred to be affixed to anything which is fabulous; and it is our duty to inquire whether we believe, or encourage the people to believe, in fables or in facts.

It would be a project worthy the situation we are in to invite an inquiry of this kind. We have committees for various objects; and among others, a committee for bells. We have institutions, academies and societies for various purposes; but we have none for inquiring into the historical truth in matters of religious concern.

They show us certain books which they call the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, and other names of that kind; but we ought to know what evidence there is for our believing them to be so, and at what

time they originated and in what manner. We know that men could make books, and we know that artifice and superstition could give them a name—could call them sacred. But we ought to be careful that the name of our Creator be not abused. Let then all the evidence with respect to those books be made a subject of inquiry. If there be evidence to warrant our belief of them, let us encourage the propagation of it; but if not, let us be careful not to promote the cause of delusion and falsehood.

I have already spoken of the Quakers—that they have no priests, no bells—and that they are remarkable for their care of the poor of their Society. They are equally as remarkable for the education of their children. I am a descendant of a family of that profession; my father was a Quaker; and I presume I may be admitted an evidence of what I assert.

The seeds of good principles, and the literary means of advancement in the world, are laid in early life. Instead, therefore, of consuming the substance of the nation upon priests, whose life at best is a life of idleness, let us think of providing for the education of those who have not the means of doing it themselves. One good schoolmaster is of more use than a hundred priests.

If we look back at what was the condition of France under the *ancien régime,* we cannot acquit the priests of corrupting the morals of the nation. Their pretended celibacy led them to carry debauchery and domestic infidelity into every family where they could gain admission; and their blasphemous pretensions to forgive sins encouraged the commission of them. Why has the Revolution of France been stained with crimes, which the Revolution of the United States of America was not? Men are physically the same in all countries; it is education that makes them different. Accustom a people to believe that priests or any other class of men can forgive sins, and you will have sins in abundance.

I come now to speak more particularly to the object of your report.

You claim a privilege incompatible with the Constitution and with rights. The Constitution protects equally, as it ought to do, every profession of religion; it gives no exclusive privilege to any. The churches are the common property of all the people; they are national goods, and cannot be given exclusively to any one profession, because the right does not exist of giving to any one that which appertains to all.

It would be consistent with right that the churches be sold, and the money arising therefrom be invested

as a fund for the education of children of poor parents of every profession, and, if more than sufficient for this purpose, that the surplus be appropriated to the support of the aged poor. After this, every profession can erect its own place of worship, if it choose—support its own priests, if it choose to have any—or perform its worship without priests, as the Quakers do.

As to bells, they are a public nuisance. If one profession is to have bells, and another has the right to use the instruments of the same kind, or any other noisy instrument, some may choose to meet at the sound of cannon, another at the beat of drum, another at the sound of trumpets, and so on, until the whole becomes a scene of general confusion. But if we permit ourselves to think of the state of the sick, and the many sleepless nights and days they undergo, we shall feel the impropriety of increasing their distress by the noise of bells, or any other noisy instruments.

Quiet and private domestic devotion neither offends nor incommodes anybody; and the Constitution has wisely guarded against the use of externals. Bells come under this description, and public processions still more so. Streets and highways are for the accommodation of persons following their several occupations, and no sectary has a right to incommode

them. If anyone has, every other has the same; and the meeting of various and contradictory processions would be tumultuous.

Those who formed the Constitution had wisely reflected upon these cases; and, while they were careful to preserve the equal right of everyone, they restrained everyone from giving offense, or incommoding another.

Men who, through a long and tumultuous scene, have lived in retirement as you have done, may think, when they arrive at power, that nothing is more easy than to put the world to rights in an instant; they form to themselves gay ideas at the success of their projects; but they forget to contemplate the difficulties that attend them and the dangers with which they are pregnant.

Alas! nothing is so easy as to deceive one's self. Did all men think as you think, or as you say, your plan would need no advocate, because it would have no opposer; but there are millions who think differently to you, and who are determined to be neither the dupes nor the slaves of error or design.

It is your good fortune to arrive at power, when the sunshine of prosperity is breaking forth after a long and stormy night. The firmness of your colleagues, and of those you have succeeded—the un-

abated energy of the Directory, and the unequaled bravery of the armies of the Republic—have made the way smooth and easy to you.

If you look back at the difficulties that existed when the Constitution commenced, you cannot but be confounded with admiration at the difference between that time and now. At that moment the Directory were placed like the forlorn hope of an army, but you were in safe retirement. They occupied the post of honorable danger, and they have merited well of their country.

You talk of justice and benevolence, but you begin at the wrong end. The defenders of your country, and the deplorable state of the poor, are objects of prior consideration to priests and bells and gaudy processions.

You talk of peace, but your manner of talking of it embarrasses the Directory in making it, and serves to prevent it. Had you been an actor in all the scenes of government from its commencement, you would have been too well informed to have brought forward projects that operate to encourage the enemy.

When you arrived at a share in the government, you found everything tending to a prosperous issue. A series of victories unequaled in the world, and in the obtaining of which you had no share, preceded

your arrival. Every enemy but one was subdued; and that one (the Hanoverian Government of England), deprived of every hope, and a bankrupt in all its resources, was sueing for peace. In such a state of things, no new question that might tend to agitate and anarchize the interior ought to have had place; and the project you propose tends directly to that end.

While France was a monarchy, and under the government of those things called kings and priests, England could always defeat her; but since France has RISEN TO BE A REPUBLIC, the GOVERNMENT OF ENGLAND crouches beneath her, so great is the difference between a government of kings and priests, and that which is founded on the system of representation.

But, could the Government of England find a way, under the sanction of your report, to inundate France with a flood of emigrant priests, she would find also the way to domineer as before; she would retrieve her shattered finances at your expense, and the ringing of bells would be the tocsin of your downfall.

Did peace consist in nothing but the cessation of war, it would not be difficult; but the terms are yet to be arranged; and those terms will be better or worse, in proportion as France and her counsels be united or divided. That the Government of England

counts much upon your Report, and upon others of a similar tendency, is what the writer of this letter, who knows that government well, has no doubt.

You are but new on the theater of government, and you ought to suspect yourself of misjudging; the experience of those who have gone before you, should be of some service to you. But if, in consequence of such measures as you propose, you put it out of the power of the Directory to make a good peace, and force them to accept of terms you would afterwards reprobate, it is yourself that must bear the censure.

You conclude your Report by the following address to your colleagues:

> Let us hasten, representatives of the people! to affix to these tutelary laws the seal of our unanimous approbation. All our fellow-citizens will learn to cherish political liberty from the enjoyment of religious liberty: you will have broken the most powerful arm of your enemies; you will have surrounded this assembly with the most impregnable rampart—confidence, and the people's love.
>
> O my colleagues, how desirable is that popularity which is the offspring of good laws! What a consolation it will be to us hereafter, when returned to our own firesides, to hear from the mouths of our fellow-citizens these simple expressions—*Blessings reward you, men of peace! you have restored to us our temples, our ministers, the liberty of adoring the God of our fathers: you have recalled harmony to our families—morality to our hearts:*

you have made us adore the legislature and respect all its laws!

Is it possible, citizen representative, that you can be serious in this address? Were the lives of the priests under the *ancien régime* such as to justify anything you say of them? Were not all France convinced of their immorality? Were they not considered as the patrons of debauchery and domestic infidelity, and not as the patrons of morals? What was their pretended celibacy but perpetual adultery? What was their blasphemous pretension to forgive sins but an encouragement to the commission of them, and a love for their own?

Do you want to lead again into France all the vices of which they have been the patrons, and to overspread the Republic with English pensioners? It is cheaper to corrupt than to conquer; and the English Government, unable to conquer, will stoop to corrupt. Arrogance and meanness, though in appearance opposite, are vices of the same heart.

Instead of concluding in the manner you have done, you ought rather to have said:

"O my colleagues! we are arrived at a glorious period—a period that promises more than we could have expected, and all that we could have wished.

Let us hasten to take into consideration the honors and rewards due to our brave defenders. Let us hasten to give encouragement to agriculture and manufactures, that commerce may reinstate itself, and our people have employment. Let us review the condition of the suffering poor, and wipe from our country the reproach of forgetting them.

"Let us devise means to establish schools of instruction, that we may banish the ignorance that the *ancien régime* of kings and priests had spread among the people. Let us propagate morality, unfettered by superstition. Let us cultivate justice and benevolence, that the God of our fathers may bless us. The helpless infant and the aged poor cry to us to remember them. Let not wretchedness be seen in our streets. Let France exhibit to the world the glorious example of expelling ignorance and misery together.

"Let these, my virtuous colleagues, be the subject of our care that, when we return among our fellow-citizens they may say, *Worthy representatives! you have done well. You have done justice and honor to our brave defenders. You have encouraged agriculture, cherished our decayed manufacturers, given new life to commerce, and employment to our people.*

"*You have removed from our country the reproach of forgetting the poor—You have caused the cry of*

the orphan to cease—You have wiped the tear from the eye of the suffering mother—You have given comfort to the aged and infirm—You have penetrated into the gloomy recesses of wretchedness, and have banished it.

"Welcome among us, ye brave and virtuous representatives, and may your example be followed by your successors!"

THOMAS PAINE.

Paris, 1797.

EXTRACTS FROM A REPLY TO THE BISHOP OF LLANDAFF

GENESIS

THE learned Bishop of Llandaff, Dr. Richard Watson, had published in 1796 "An Apology for the Bible," in reply to "The Age of Reason." On reading it, Paine immediately began his rebuttal, intending to publish it as Part III. of "The Age of Reason." He was still engaged on it in October, 1800. This plan, however, was changed. In his will Part III. and the reply to Bishop Watson are mentioned as different manuscripts.

These extracts were never published by Paine, mainly because, on returning to America from France in 1802, his theological writings were viewed askance by publishers.

While ill in 1806, Paine was nursed by a Mrs. Elihu Palmer, to whom he gave a portion of the manuscript of his reply to the Welsh Bishop, which he had transcribed. After Paine's death, she gave it to the editor of the Theophilanthropist (New York) in which it was published, as here presented, in 1810.

THE bishop says, "the oldest book in the world is Genesis." This is mere assertion; he offers no proof of it, and I go to controvert it, and to show that the book of Job, which is not a Hebrew book, but is a book of the Gentiles translated into Hebrew, is much older than the book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis means the book of Generations; to which are prefixed two chapters, the first and second, which contain two different cosmogonies, that is, two different accounts of the creation of the world, written by different persons, as I have shown in the preceding part of this work.

The first cosmogony begins at chapter i. 1, and ends at ii. 3; for the adverbial conjunction *thus*, with which chapter ii. begins, shows those three verses to belong to chapter i. The second cosmogony begins at ii. 4, and ends with that chapter.

In the first cosmogony the name of God is used without any epithet joined to it, and is repeated thirty-five times. In the second cosmogony it is always the Lord God, which is repeated eleven times. These two different styles of expression show these two chapters to be the work of two different persons, and the contradictions they contain show they cannot be the work of one and the same person, as I have already shown.

The third chapter, in which the style of Lord God is continued in every instance except in the supposed conversation between the woman and the serpent (for in every place in that chapter where the writer speaks, it is always the Lord God) shows this chapter to belong to the second cosmogony.

This chapter gives an account of what is called the *fall of man*, which is no other than a fable borrowed from, and constructed upon, the religious allegory of Zoroaster, or the Persians, of the annual progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the Zodiac. It is the *fall of the year*, the approach and *evil* of winter,

announced by the ascension of the autumnal constellation of the *serpent* of the zodiac, and not the moral *fall of man,* that is the key of the allegory, and of the fable in Genesis borrowed from it.

The *fall of man,* in Genesis is said to have been produced by eating a certain fruit, generally taken to be an apple. The fall of the year is the season for the gathering and eating the new apples of that year. The allegory, therefore, holds with respect to the fruit, which it would not have done had it been an early summer fruit. It holds also with respect to place.

The tree is said to have been placed in the midst of the garden. But why in the midst of the garden more than in any other place? The solution of the allegory gives the answer to this question, which is, that the fall of the year, when apples and other autumnal fruits are ripe, and when days and nights are of equal length, is the mid-season between summer and winter.

It holds also with respect to clothing, and the temperature of the air. It is said in Genesis (iii. 21), "*Unto Adam and his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*" But why are coats of skins mentioned? This cannot be understood as referring to anything of the nature of *moral evil.* The solution of the allegory gives again the answer to this

question, which is, that the *evil of winter,* which follows the *fall of the year,* fabulously called in Genesis the *fall of man,* makes warm clothing necessary.

But of these things I shall speak fully when I come in another part to treat of the ancient religion of the Persians, and compare it with the modern religion of the New Testament. At present I shall confine myself to the comparative antiquity of the books of Genesis and Job, taking, at the same time, whatever I may find in my way with respect to the fabulousness of the book of Genesis; for if what is called the *fall of man,* in Genesis, be fabulous, or allegorical, that which is called the redemption in the New Testament cannot be a fact. It is logically impossible, and impossible also in the nature of things, that *moral good* can redeem *physical evil.* I return to the bishop.

If Genesis be, as the bishop asserts, the oldest book in the world, and, consequently, the oldest and first written book of the Bible, and if the extraordinary things related in it; such as the creation of the world in six days, the tree of life, and of good and evil, the story of Eve and the talking serpent, the fall of man and his being turned out of Paradise, were facts, or even believed by the Jews to be facts, they would be referred to as fundamental matters, and that very frequently, in the books of the Bible that were written

by various authors afterwards; whereas, there is not a book, chapter or verse of the Bible, from the time that Moses is said to have written the book of Genesis, to the book of Malachi, the last book in the Bible, including a space of more than a thousand years, in which there is any mention made of these things, or any of them, nor are they so much as alluded to. How will the bishop solve this difficulty, which stands as a circumstantial contradiction to his assertion?

There are but two ways of solving it:

First, that the book of Genesis is not an ancient book, that it has been written by some (now) unknown person, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about a thousand years after the time that Moses is said to have lived, and put as a preface or introduction to the other books when they were formed into a canon in the time of the second temple, and therefore not having existed before that time, none of these things mentioned in it could be referred to in those books.

Secondly, that admitting Genesis to have been written by Moses, the Jews did not believe the things stated in it to be true, and therefore, as they could not refer to them as facts, they would not refer to them as fables. The first of these solutions goes against the

antiquity of the book, and the second against its authenticity; and the bishop may take which he please.

But be the author of Genesis whoever it may, there is abundant evidence to show, as well from the early Christian writers as from the Jews themselves, that the things stated in that book were not believed to be facts. Why they have been believed as facts since that time, when better and fuller knowledge existed on the case than is known now, can be accounted for only on the imposition of priestcraft.

Augustine, one of the early champions of the Christian Church, acknowledges in his "City of God" that the adventure of Eve and the serpent, and the account of Paradise, were generally considered as fiction or allegory. He regards them as allegory himself, without attempting to give any explanation, but he supposes that a better explanation might be found than those that had been offered.

Origen, another early champion of the Church, says, "What man of good sense can ever persuade himself that there were a first, a second, and a third day, and that each of these days had a night when there were yet neither sun, moon, nor stars? What man can be stupid enough to believe that God, acting the part of a gardener, had planted a garden in the East, that the tree of life was a real tree, and that its

fruit had the virtue of making those who eat of it live forever?"

Maimonides, one of the most learned and celebrated of the Jewish rabbins, who lived in the Eleventh Century (about seven or eight hundred years ago) and to whom the bishop refers in his answer to me, is very explicit in his book entitled "Moreh Nebuchim," upon the non-reality of the things stated in the account of the Creation in the book of Genesis.

We ought not (says he) to understand, nor take according to the letter, that which is written in the book of the creation; nor to have the same ideas of it which common men have; otherwise our ancient sages would not have recommended with so much care to conceal the sense of it, and not to raise the allegorical veil which envelopes the truths it contains.

The book of Genesis, taken according to the letter, gives the most absurd and the most extravagant ideas of the Divinity. Whoever shall find out the sense of it, ought to restrain himself from divulging it. It is a maxim which all our sages repeat, and above all with respect to the work of six days.

It may happen that some one, with the aid he may borrow from others, may hit upon the meaning of it. In that case he ought to impose silence upon himself; or if he speak of it, he ought to speak obscurely, and in an enigmatical manner, as I do myself, leaving the rest to be found out by those who can understand me.

This is, certainly, a very extraordinary declaration of Maimonides, taking all the parts of it. First, he declares, that the account of the Creation in the book of Genesis is not a fact, and that to believe it to be a fact gives the most absurd and the most extravagant ideas of the Divinity. Secondly, that it is an allegory. Thirdly, that the allegory has a concealed secret. Fourthly, that whoever can find the secret ought not to tell it.

It is this last part that is the most extraordinary. Why all this care of the Jewish rabbins to prevent what they call the concealed meaning, or the secret, from being known, and if known to prevent any of their people from telling it? It certainly must be something which the Jewish nation are afraid or ashamed the world should know.

It must be something personal to them as a people, and not a secret of a divine nature, which the more it is known the more it increases the glory of the Creator, and the gratitude and happiness of man. It is not God's secret but their own they are keeping. I go to unveil the secret.

The case is, the Jews have stolen their cosmogony, that is, their account of the Creation, from the cosmogony of the Persians, contained in the books of Zoroaster, the Persian law-giver, and brought it with

them when they returned from captivity by the benevolence of Cyrus, King of Persia. For it is evident, from the silence of all the books of the Bible upon the subject of the Creation, that the Jews had no cosmogony before that time.

If they had a cosmogony from the time of Moses, some of their judges who governed during more than four hundred years, or of their kings, the Davids and Solomons of their day, who governed nearly five hundred years, or of their prophets and psalmists, who lived in the meantime, would have mentioned it.

It would, either as fact or fable, have been the grandest of all subjects for a psalm. It would have suited to a tittle the ranting poetical genius of Isaiah, or served as a cordial to the gloomy Jeremiah. But not one word, not even a whisper, does any of the Bible authors give upon the subject.

To conceal the theft the rabbins of the second temple have published Genesis as a book of Moses, and have enjoined secrecy to all their people, who by traveling or otherwise might happen to discover from whence the cosmogony was borrowed, not to tell it. The evidence of circumstances is often unanswerable, and there is no other than this which I have given that goes to the whole of the case, and this does.

Diogenes Laertius, an ancient and respectable author, whom the bishop in his answer to me quotes on another occasion, has a passage that corresponds with the solution here given. In speaking of the religion of the Persians as promulgated by their priests or magi, he says the Jewish rabbins were the successors of their doctrine.

Having thus spoken on the plagiarism, and on the non-reality of the book of Genesis, I will give some additional evidence that Moses is not the author of that book.

Aben-Ezra, a celebrated Jewish author, who lived about seven hundred years ago, and whom the bishop allows to have been a man of great erudition, has made a great many observations, too numerous to be repeated here, to show that Moses was not, and could not be, the author of the book of Genesis, nor of any of the five books that bear his name.

Spinoza, another learned Jew, who lived about a hundred and thirty years ago, recites, in his treatise on the ceremonies of the Jews, ancient and modern, the observations of Aben-Ezra, to which he adds many others, to show that Moses is not the author of those books.

He also says, and shows his reasons for saying it, that the Bible did not exist as a book till the time of

the Maccabees, which was more than a hundred years after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.

In the second part of "The Age of Reason," I have, among other things, referred to nine verses in Genesis xxxvi, beginning at verse 31 (These are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel), which it is impossible could have been written by Moses, or in the time of Moses, and which could not have been written till after the Jew kings began to reign in Israel, which was not till several hundred years after the time of Moses.

The bishop allows this, and says "I think you say true." But he then quibbles, and says that "a small addition to a book does not destroy either the genuineness or authenticity of the whole book." This is priestcraft. These verses do not stand in the book as an addition to it, but as making a part of the whole book, and which it is impossible that Moses could write.

The bishop would reject the antiquity of any other book if it could be proved from the words of the book itself that a part of it could not have been written till several hundred years after the reputed author of it was dead. He would call such a book a forgery.

I am authorized, therefore, to call the book of Genesis a forger.

Combining, then, all the foregoing circumstances together, respecting the antiquity and authenticity of the book of Genesis, a conclusion will naturally follow therefrom. Those circumstances are:

First, that certain parts of the book cannot possibly have been written by Moses, and that the other parts carry no evidence of having been written by him.

Secondly, the universal silence of all the following books of the Bible, for about a thousand years, upon the extraordinary things spoken of in Genesis, such as the creation of the world in six days—the garden of Eden—the tree of knowledge—the tree of life—the story of Eve and the serpent—the fall of man and of his being turned out of this fine garden, together with Noah's flood, and the tower of Babel.

Thirdly, the silence of all the books of the Bible upon even the name of Moses, from the book of Joshua until the second book of Kings, which was not written till after the captivity, for it gives an account of the captivity, a period of about a thousand years.

Strange that a man who is proclaimed as the historian of the Creation, the privy-counsellor and confidant of the Almighty—the legislator of the Jewish nation and the founder of its religion; strange, I say,

that even the name of such a man should not find a place in their books for a thousand years, if they knew or believed anything about him or the books he is said to have written.

Fourthly, the opinion of some of the most celebrated of the Jewish commentators that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis, founded on the reasons given for that opinion.

Fifthly, the opinion of the early Christian writers, and of the great champion of Jewish literature, Maimonides, that the book of Genesis is not a book of facts.

Sixthly, the silence imposed by all the Jewish rabbins, and by Maimonides himself, upon the Jewish nation, not to speak of anything they may happen to know or discover respecting the cosmogony (or creation of the world), in the book of Genesis.

From these circumstances the following conclusions offer:

First, that the book of Genesis is not a book of facts.

Secondly, that as no mention is made throughout the Bible of any of the extraordinary things relating in [it], Genesis has not been written till after the other books were written, and put as a preface to the

Bible. Every one knows that a preface to a book, though it stands first, is the last written.

Thirdly, that the silence imposed by all the Jewish rabbins and by Maimonides upon the Jewish nation, to keep silence upon everything related in their cosmogony, evinces a secret they are not willing should be known.

The secret therefore explains itself to be that when the Jews were in captivity in Babylon and Persia they became acquainted with the cosmogony of the Persians, as registered in the Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster, the Persian law-giver, which, after their return from captivity, they manufactured and modeled as their own, and antedated it by giving to it the name of Moses. The case admits of no other explanation.

From all which it appears that the book of Genesis, instead of being the *oldest book in the world,* as the bishop calls it, has been the last written book of the Bible, and that the cosmogony it contains has been manufactured.

Of the Names in the Book of Genesis

Everything in Genesis serves as evidence or symptom that the book has been composed in some late period of the Jewish nation. Even the names mentioned in it serve to this purpose.

Nothing is more common or more natural than to name the children of succeeding generations after the names of those who had been celebrated in some former generation. This holds good with respect to all the people and all the histories we know of, and it does not hold good with the Bible. There must be some cause for this.

This book of Genesis tells us of a man whom it calls Adam, and of his sons Abel and Seth; of Enoch, who lived three hundred and sixty-five years (it is exactly the number of days in a year), and that then God took him up. (It has the appearance of being taken from some allegory of the Gentiles on the commencement and termination of the year, by the progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac, on which the allegorical religion of the Gentiles was founded.)

It tells us of Methuselah who lived 969 years, and of a long train of other names in the fifth chapter. It then passes on to a man whom it calls Noah, and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet; then to Lot, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his sons, with which the book of Genesis finishes.

All these, according to the account given in that book were the most extraordinary and celebrated of men. They were moreover heads of families. Adam

was the father of the world. Enoch, for his righteousness, was taken up to heaven. Methuselah lived to almost a thousand years. He was the son of Enoch, the man of 365, the number of days in a year. It has the appearance of being the continuation of an allegory on the 365 days of the year, and its abundant productions.

Noah was selected from all the world to be preserved when it was drowned, and became the second father of the world. Abraham was the father of the faithful multitude. Isaac and Jacob were the inheritors of his fame, and the last was the father of the twelve tribes.

Now, if these very wonderful men and their names, and the book that records them, had been known by the Jews before the Babylonian captivity, those names would have been as common among the Jews before that period as they have been since. We now hear of thousands of Abrahams, Isaacs, and Jacobs among the Jews, but there were none of that name before the Babylonian captivity. The Bible does not mention one, though from the time that Abraham is said to have lived to the time of the Babylonian captivity is about 1,400 years.

How is it to be accounted for that there have been so many thousands, and perhaps hundreds of thou-

sands of Jews of the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob since that period, and not one before?

It can be accounted for but one way, which is, that before the Babylonian captivity the Jews had no such book as Genesis, nor knew anything of the names and persons it mentions, nor of the things it relates, and that the stories in it have been manufactured since that time. From the Arabic name *Ibrahim* (which is the manner the Turks write that name to this day) the Jews have, most probably, manufactured their Abraham.

I will advance my observations a point further, and speak of the names of *Moses* and *Aaron*, mentioned for the first time in the book of Exodus. There are now, and have continued to be from the time of the Babylonian captivity, or soon after it, thousands of Jews of the names of *Moses* and *Aaron*, and we read not of any of that name before that time. The Bible does not mention one.

The direct inference from this is, that the Jews knew of no such book as Exodus before the Babylonian captivity. In fact, that it did not exist before that time, and that it is only since the book has been invented that the names of *Moses* and *Aaron* have been common among the Jews.

It is applicable to the purpose to observe that the picturesque work, called *Mosaic-work;* spelled the same as you would say the *Mosaic* account of the Creation, is not derived from the word *Moses* but from *Muses* (the *Muses*), because of the variegated and picturesque pavement in the temple dedicated to the *Muses*. This carries a strong implication that the name *Moses* is drawn from the same source, and that he is not a real but an allegorical person, as Maimonides describes what is called the *Mosaic* account of the Creation to be.

I will go a point still further. The Jews now know the book of Genesis, and the names of all the persons mentioned in the first *ten chapters* of that book, from Adam to Noah: yet we do not hear (I speak for myself) of any *Jew* of the present day, of the name of Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Ham or Japhet (names mentioned in the first ten chapters), though these were, according to the account in that book, the most extraordinary of all the names that make up the catalogue of the Jewish chronology.

The names the Jews now adopt are those that are mentioned in Genesis after the tenth chapter, as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. How then does it happen that they do not adopt the names found in the

first ten chapters? Here is evidently a line of division drawn between the first ten chapters of Genesis and the remaining chapters, with respect to the adoption of names. There must be some cause for this, and I go to offer a solution of the problem.

The reader will recollect the quotation I have already made from the Jewish rabbin, Maimonides, wherein he says, "We ought not to understand nor to take according to the letter that which is written in the book of the creation. . . . It is a maxim (says he) which all our sages repeat, *above all* with respect to the work of six days." The qualifying expression *above all* implies there are other parts of the book, though not so important, that ought not to be understood or taken according to the letter, and as the Jews do not adopt the names mentioned in the first ten chapters, it appears evident those chapters are included in the injunction not to take them in a literal sense, or according to the letter.

From which it follows, that the persons cr characters mentioned in the first ten chapters, as Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, and so on to Noah, are not real, but fictitious or allegorical persons, and therefore the Jews do not adopt their names into their families. If they affixed the same idea of reality to them as they do to those that follow after the tenth

chapter, the names of Adam, Abel, Seth, etc., would be as common among the Jews of the present day as are those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Aaron.

In the superstition they have been in, scarcely a Jew family would have been without an *Enoch,* as a presage of his going to heaven as ambassador for the whole family. Every mother who wished that the *days* of her son *might be long in the land* would call him *Methuselah;* and all the Jews that might have to traverse the ocean would be named Noah, as a charm against shipwreck and drowning.

This is domestic evidence against the book of Genesis, which, joined to the several kinds of evidence before recited, show the book of Genesis not to be older than the Babylonian captivity, and to be fictitious. I proceed to fix the character and antiquity of the book of Job.

The book of Job has not the least appearance of being a book of the Jews, and though printed among the books of the Bible, does not belong to it. There is no reference to it in any Jewish law or ceremony. On the contrary, all the internal evidence it contains shows it to be a book of the Gentiles, either of Persia or Chaldea.

The name of Job does not appear to be a Jewish name. There is no Jew of that name in any of the

books of the Bible, neither is there now that I ever heard of. The country where Job is said or supposed to have lived, or rather where the scene of the drama is laid, is called Uz, and there was no place of that name ever belonging to the Jews.* If Uz is the same as Ur, it was in Chaldea, the country of the Gentiles.

The Jews can give no account how they came by this book, nor who was the author, nor the time when it was written. Origen, in his work against Celsus (in the first ages of the Christian Church), says that *the book of Job is older than Moses.* Aben-Ezra, the Jewish commentator, whom (as I have before said) the bishop allows to have been a man of great erudition, and who certainly understood his own language, says that the book of Job has been translated from another language into Hebrew.

Spinoza, another Jewish commentator of great learning, confirms the opinion of Aben-Ezra, and says moreover, *"Je crois que Job était Gentil"*; † "I believe that Job was a Gentile."

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* The land of Uz is mentioned in Jeremiah xxv. 20, and Lamentations iv. 21; in both cases the indications being that it was a Gentile region. Biblical geographers generally locate Uz as in Arabia.—*Editor.*

† Spinoza on the Ceremonies of the Jews, p. 296, published in French at Amsterdam, 1678.—*Author.*

The bishop (in answer to me), says, that "the structure of the whole book of Job, in whatever light of history or drama it be considered, is founded on the belief that prevailed with the Persians and Chaldeans, and other Gentile nations, of a good and an evil spirit."

In speaking of the good and evil spirit of the Persians, the bishop writes them *Arimanius* and *Oromasdes*. I will not dispute about the orthography, because I know that translated names are differently spelled in different languages. But he has nevertheless made a capital error. He has put the devil first; for Arimanius, or, as it is more generally written, *Ahriman,* is the *evil spirit,* and *Oromasdes* or *Ormusd* the good spirit.

He has made the same mistake in the same paragraph, in speaking of the good and evil spirit of the ancient Egyptians, *Osiris* and *Typho;* he puts Typho before Osiris. The error is just the same as if the bishop in writing about the Christian religion, or in preaching a sermon, were to say the *Devil* and *God.*

A priest ought to know his own trade better. We agree, however, about the structure of the book of Job, that it is Gentile. I have said in the second part of "The Age of Reason," and given my reasons for it, that *the drama of it is not Hebrew.*

From the testimonies I have cited, that of Origen, who, about fourteen hundred years ago, said that the book of Job was more ancient than Moses, that of Aben-Ezra who, in his commentary on Job, says it has been translated from another language (and consequently from a Gentile language) into Hebrew; that of Spinoza, who not only says the same thing, but that the author of it was a Gentile; and that of the bishop, who says that the structure of the whole book is Gentile; it follows, in the first place, that the book of Job is not a book of the Jews originally.

Then, in order to determine to what people or nation any book of religion belongs, we must compare it with the leading dogmas and precepts of that people or nation; and therefore, upon the bishop's own construction, the book of Job belongs either to the ancient Persians, the Chaldeans or the Egyptians; because the structure of it is consistent with the dogma they held, that of a good and an evil spirit, called in Job *God* and *Satan*, existing as distinct and separate beings, and it is not consistent with any dogma of the Jews.

The belief of a good and an evil spirit, existing as distinct and separate beings, is not a dogma to be found in any of the books of the Bible. It is not till we come to the New Testament that we hear of any

such dogma. There the person called the Son of God holds conversation with Satan on a mountain, as familiarly as is represented in the drama of Job. Consequently the bishop cannot say, in this respect, that the New Testament is founded upon the Old.

According to the Old, the God of the Jews was the God of everything. All good and evil came from Him. According to Exodus it was God, and not the devil, that hardened Pharaoh's heart. According to the book of Samuel, it was an evil spirit from *God* that troubled Saul. And Ezekiel makes God to say, in speaking of the Jews, *"I gave them the statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they should not live."*

The Bible describes the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in such a contradictory manner, and under such a twofold character, there would be no knowing when He was in earnest and when in irony; when to believe, and when not.

As to the precepts, principles, and maxims in the book of Job, they show that the people abusively called the heathen in the books of the Jews, had the most sublime ideas of the Creator, and the most exalted devotional morality. It was the Jews who dishonored God. It was the Gentiles who glorified Him.

As to the fabulous personifications introduced by the Greek and Latin poets, it was a corruption of the ancient religion of the Gentiles, which consisted in the adoration of a first cause of the works of the creation, in which the sun was the great visible agent. It appears to have been a religion of gratitude and adoration, and not of prayer and discontented solicitation.

In Job we find adoration and submission, but not prayer. Even the Ten Commandments enjoin not prayer. Prayer has been added to devotion by the Church of Rome, as the instrument of fees and perquisites.

All prayers by the priests of the Christian Church, whether public or private, must be paid for. It may be right, individually, to pray for virtues or mental instruction, but not for things. It is an attempt to dictate to the Almighty in the government of the world. But to return to the book of Job.

As the book of Job decides itself to be a book of the Gentiles, the next thing is to find out to what particular nation it belongs, and lastly, what is its antiquity.

As a composition, it is sublime, beautiful and scientific: full of sentiment, and abounding in grand metaphorical description. As a drama it is regular.

The *dramatis personæ*, the persons performing the several parts, are regularly introduced, and speak without interruption or confusion. The scene, as I have before said, is laid in the country of the Gentiles, and the unities, though not always necessary in a drama, are observed here as strictly as the subject would admit.

In the last act, where the Almighty is introduced as speaking from the whirlwind, to decide the controversy between Job and his friends, it is an idea as grand as poetical imagination can conceive. What follows of Job's future prosperity does not belong to it as a drama. It is an epilogue of the writer, as the first verses of the first chapter, which gave an account of Job, his country and his riches, are the prologue.

The book carries the appearance of being the work of some of the Persian magi, not only because the structure of it corresponds to the dogma of the religion of those people, as founded by Zoroaster, but from the astronomical references in it to the constellations of the zodiac and other objects in the heavens, of which the sun, in their religion called Mithra, was the chief.

Job, in describing the power of God, (ix. 7–9), says, "Who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars. Who alone spreadeth out

the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Who maketh Arcturus, Orion and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south." All this astronomical allusion is consistent with the religion of the Persians.

Establishing then the book of Job as the work of some of the Persian or Eastern magi, the case naturally follows that when the Jews returned from captivity, by the permission of Cyrus, King of Persia, they brought this book with them, had it translated into Hebrew, and put into their scriptural canons, which were not formed till after their return. This will account for the name of Job being mentioned in Ezekiel, (xiv. 14), who was one of the captives, and also for its not being mentioned in any book said or supposed to have been written before the captivity.

Among the astronomical allusions in the book, there is one which serves to fix its antiquity. It is that where God is made to say to Job, in the style of reprimand, "*Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades*" (xxxviii. 31). As the explanation of this depends upon astronomical calculation, I will, for the sake of those who would not otherwise understand it, endeavor to explain it as clearly as the subject will admit.

The Pleiades are a cluster of pale, milky stars, about the size of a man's hand, in the constellation

Taurus, or in English, the Bull. It is one of the constellations of the zodiac, of which there are twelve, answering to the twelve months of the year. The Pleiades are visible in the winter nights, but not in the summer nights, being then below the horizon.

The zodiac is an imaginary belt or circle in the heavens, eighteen degrees broad, in which the sun apparently makes his annual course, and in which all the planets move. When the sun appears to our view to be between us and the group of stars forming such or such a constellation, he is said to be in that constellation. Consequently the constellations he appears to be in, in the summer, are directly opposite to those he appeared in in the winter, and the same with respect to spring and autumn.

The zodiac, besides being divided into twelve constellations, is also, like every other circle, great or small, divided into 360 equal parts, called degrees; consequently each constellation contains 30 degrees. The constellations of the zodiac are generally called signs, to distinguish them from the constellations that are placed out of the zodiac, and this is the name I shall now use.

The procession of the Equinoxes is the part most difficult to explain, and it is on this that the explanation chiefly depends.

The Equinoxes correspond to the two seasons of the year when the sun makes equal day and night.

SABBATH OR SUNDAY.—The seventh day, or more properly speaking the period of seven days, was originally a numerical division of time and nothing more; and had the bishop been acquainted with the history of astronomy, he would have known this. The annual revolution of the earth makes what we call a year. The year is artificially divided into months, the months into weeks of seven days, the days into hours, etc. The period of seven days, like any other of the artificial divisions of the year, is only a fractional part thereof, contrived for the convenience of countries. It is ignorance, imposition, and priestcraft, that have called it otherwise.

They might as well talk of the Lord's month, of the Lord's week, of the Lord's hour, as of the Lord's day. All time is His, and no part of it is more holy or more sacred than another. It is, however, necessary to the trade of a priest that he should preach up a distinction of days.

Before the science of astronomy was studied and carried to the degree of eminence to which it was by the Egyptians and Chaldeans, the people of those times had no other helps than what common observation of the very visible changes of the sun and

moon afforded to enable them to keep an account of the progress of time.

As far as history establishes the point, the Egyptians were the first people who divided the year into twelve months. Herodotus, who lived above 2,200 years ago, and is the most ancient historian whose works have reached our time, says, *they did this by the knowledge they had of the stars.*

As to the Jews, there is not one single improvement in any science or in any scientific art that they ever produced. They were the most ignorant of all the illiterate world. If the word of the Lord had come to them, as they pretend, and as the bishop professes to believe, and that they were to be the harbingers of it to the rest of the world, the Lord would have taught them the use of letters, and the art of printing; for without the means of communicating the word, it could not be communicated; whereas letters were the invention of the Gentile world, and printing of the modern world. But to return to my subject—

Before the helps which the science of astronomy afforded, the people, as before said, had no other whereby to keep an account of the progress of time than what the common and very visible changes of the sun and moon afforded. They saw that a great

number of days made a year, but the account of them was too tedious and too difficult to be kept numerically, from one to three hundred and sixty-five; neither did they know the true time of a solar year.

It therefore became necessary, for the purpose of marking the progress of days, to put them into small parcels such as are now called weeks; and which consisted as they now do of seven days.

By this means the memory was assisted as it is with us at this day; for we do not say of anything past that it was fifty, sixty or seventy days ago, but that it was so many weeks, or, if longer time, so many months. It is impossible to keep an account of time without helps of this kind.

Julian Scaliger, the inventor of the Julian period of 7,980 years, produced by multiplying the cycle of the moon, the cycle of the sun, and the years of an indiction, 19, 28, 15, into each other, says that the custom of reckoning by periods of seven days was used by the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Hebrews, the people of India, the Arabs, and by all the nations of the East.

In addition to what Scaliger says, it is evident that in Britain, in Germany, and the north of Europe, they reckoned by periods of seven days long before

the book called the Bible was known in those parts; and, consequently, that they did not take that mode of reckoning from anything written in that book.

That they reckoned by periods of seven days is evident from their having seven names and no more for the several days; and which have not the most distant relation to anything in the book of Genesis, or to that which is called the fourth commandment.

Those names are still retained in England, with no other alteration than what has been produced by molding the Saxon and Danish languages into modern English:

1. Sun-day from *Sunne* the sun, and *dag*, day, Saxon. *Sondag*, Danish. The day dedicated to the sun.

2. Monday, that is moonday, from *Mona*, the moon, Saxon. *Moano*, Danish. Day dedicated to the moon.

3. Tuesday, that is *Tuisco's-day*. The day dedicated to the idol *Tuisco*.

4. Wednes-day, that is *Woden's-day*. The day dedicated to *Woden*, the Mars of the Germans.

5. Thursday, that is *Thor's-day*, dedicated to the Idol *Thor*.

6. Friday, that is *Friga's-day*. The day dedicated to *Friga*, the Venus of the Saxons.

7. Saturday from *Seaten* (*Saturn*), an idol of the Saxons; one of the emblems representing time, which continually terminates and renews itself; the last day of the period of seven days.

When we see a certain mode of reckoning general among nations totally unconnected, differing from each other in religion and in government, and some of them unknown to each other, we may be certain that it arises from some natural and common cause, prevailing alike over all, and which strikes everyone in the same manner.

Thus all nations have reckoned arithmetically by tens, because the people of all nations have ten fingers. If they had more or less than ten, the mode of arithmetical reckoning would have followed that number, for the fingers are a natural numeration table to all the world. I now come to show why the period of seven days is so generally adopted.

Though the sun is the great luminary of the world, and the animating cause of all the fruits of the earth, the moon by renewing herself more than twelve times oftener than the sun, which does it but once a year,

served the rustic world as a natural almanac, as the fingers served it for a numeration table.

All the world could see the moon, her changes, and her monthly revolutions; and their mode of reckoning time was accommodated, as nearly as could possibly be done in round numbers, to agree with the changes of that planet, their natural almanac. The moon performs her natural revolution round the earth in twenty-nine days and a half. She goes from a new moon to a half moon, to a full moon, to a half moon gibbous or convex, and then to a new moon again.

Each of these changes is performed in seven days and nine hours; but seven days is the nearest division in round numbers that could be taken; and this was sufficient to suggest the universal custom of reckoning by periods of seven days, since it is impossible to reckon time without some stated period.

How the odd hours could be disposed of without interfering with the regular periods of seven days, in case the ancients recommenced a new Septenary period with every new moon, required no more difficulty than it did to regulate the Egyptian calendar afterwards of twelve months of thirty days each, or the odd hour in the Julian calendar, or the odd days and hours in the French calendar. In all cases it is

done by the addition of complementary days; and it can be done in no otherwise.

The bishop knows that as the solar year does not end at the termination of what we call a day, but runs some hours into the next day, as the quarter of the moon runs some hours beyond seven days; that it is impossible to give the year any fixed number of days that will not in course of years become wrong, and make a complementary time necessary to keep the nominal year parallel with the solar year.

The same must have been the case with those who regulated time formerly by lunar revolutions. They would have to add three days to every second moon, or in that proportion, in order to make the new moon and the new week commence together, like the nominal year and the solar year.

Diodorus of Sicily, who, as before said, lived before Christ was born, in giving an account of times much anterior to his own, speaks of years of three months, of four months, and of six months. These could be of no other than years composed of lunar revolutions, and therefore, to bring the several periods of seven days to agree with such years, there must have been complementary days.

The moon was the first almanac the world knew; and the only one which the face of the heavens af-

forded to common spectators. Her changes and her revolutions have entered into all the calendars that have been known in the known world.

The division of the year into twelve months, which, as before shown, was first done by the Egyptians, though arranged with astronomical knowledge, had reference to the twelve moons, or more properly speaking to the twelve lunar revolutions, that appear in the space of a solar year; as the period of seven days had reference to one revolution of the moon.

The feasts of the Jews were, and those of the Christian Church still are, regulated by the moon. The Jews observed the feasts of the new moon and full moon, and therefore the period of seven days was necessary to them.

All the feasts of the Christian Church are regulated by the moon. That called Easter governs all the rest, and the moon governs Easter. It is always the first Sunday after the first full moon that happens after the vernal equinox, or twenty-first of March.

In proportion as the science of astronomy was studied and improved by the Egyptians and Chaldeans, and the solar year regulated by astronomical observations, the custom of reckoning by lunar revolutions became of less use, and in time discontinued.

But such is the harmony of all parts of the machinery of the universe, that a calculation made from the motion of one part will correspond with the motion of some other.

The period of seven days, deduced from the revolution of the moon round the earth, corresponded nearer than any other period of days would do to the revolution of the earth round the sun. Fifty-two periods of seven days make 364, which is within one day and some odd hours of a solar year; and there is no other periodical number that will do the same, till we come to the number thirteen, which is too great for common use, and the numbers before seven are too small.

The custom therefore of reckoning by periods of seven days, as best suited to the revolution of the moon, applied with equal convenience to the solar year, and became united with it. But the decimal division of time, as regulated by the French calendar, is superior to every other method.*

There is no part of the Bible that is supposed to have been written by persons who lived before the

* This division of time was adopted by the French National Convention, of which Paine was a member, in 1793. The year was divided into 12 months of 30 days each, with 5 extra days (six every fourth year) which were festivals. The months were divided by decades, and the days into 10 hours of 100 minutes each.—*Editor.*

time of Josiah, (which was a thousand years after the time of Moses), that mentions anything about the Sabbath as a day consecrated to that which is called the fourth commandment, or that the Jews kept any such day.

Had any such day been kept, during the thousand years of which I am speaking, it certainly would have been mentioned frequently; and that it should never be mentioned is strong presumptive and circumstantial evidence that no such day was kept. But mention is often made of the feasts of the new moon, and of the full moon; for the Jews, as before shown, worshiped the moon; and the word *Sabbath* was applied by the Jews to the feasts of that planet, and to those of their other deities.

It is said in Hosea, ii. 11, in speaking of the Jewish nation, "And I will cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her *new moons*, and her *sabbaths*, and all her solemn feasts." Nobody will be so foolish as to contend that the *sabbaths* here spoken of are Mosaic sabbaths. The construction of the verse implies they are lunar sabbaths, or sabbaths of the moon.

It ought also to be observed that Hosea lived in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah, about seventy years before the time of Josiah, when the law called the Law of Moses is said to have been been found; and, con-

sequently, the sabbaths that Hosea speaks of are sabbaths of the Idolatry.

When those priestly reformers (impostors I should call them) Hilkiah, Ezra and Nehemiah, began to produce books under the name of the books of Moses, they found the word *sabbath* in use: and as to the period of seven days, it is, like numbering arithmetically by tens, from time immemorial.

But having found them in use, they continued to make them serve to the support of their new imposition. They trumped up a story of the creation being made in six days, and of the Creator resting on the seventh, to suit with the lunar and chronological period of seven days; and they manufactured a commandment to agree with both.

Impostors always work in this manner. They put fables for originals, and causes for effects.

There is scarcely any part of science, or anything in nature, which those impostors and blasphemers of science, called priests, as well Christians as Jews, have not, at some time or other, perverted, or sought to pervert to the purpose of superstition and falsehood.

Everything wonderful in appearanae has been ascribed to angels, to devils, or to saints. Everything ancient has some legendary tale annexed to it. The

common operations of nature have not escaped their practise of corrupting everything.

FUTURE STATE. The idea of a future state was a universal idea to all nations except the Jews. At the time, and long before, Jesus Christ and the men called his disciples were born, it had been sublimely treated of by Cicero (in his book on Old Age), by Plato, Socrates, Xenophon and other of the ancient theologists, whom the abusive Christian Church calls heathen. Xenophon represents the elder Cyrus speaking after this manner:

> Think not, my dearest children, that when I depart from you, I shall be no more: but remember that my soul, even while I lived among you, was invisible to you; yet by my actions you were sensible it existed in this body. Believe it therefore existing still, though it be still unseen. How quickly would the honors of illustrious men perish after death, if their souls performed nothing to preserve their fame?
>
> For my own part, I could never think that the soul while in a mortal body lives, but when departed from it dies; or that its consciousness is lost when it is discharged out of an unconscious habitation. But when it is freed from all corporeal alliance, it is then that it truly exists.

Since then the idea of a future existence was universal, it may be asked, what new doctrine does the New Testament contain? I answer, that of corrupt-

ing the theory of the ancient theologists by annexing to it the heavy and gloomy doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

As to the resurrection of the body, whether the same body or another, it is a miserable conceit, fit only to be preached to man as an animal. It is not worthy to be called doctrine. Such an idea never entered the brain of any visionary but those of the Christian Church; yet it is in this that the novelty of the New Testament consists! All the other matters serve but as props to this, and those props are most wretchedly put together.

MIRACLES. The Christian Church is full of miracles. In one of the churches of Brabant they show a number of cannon balls which, they say, the Virgin Mary, in some former war, caught in her muslin *apron* as they came roaring out of the cannon's mouth, to prevent their hurting the *saints* of her favorite army. She does no such feats now-a-days. Perhaps the reason is that the infidels have taken away her muslin apron.

They show also, between Montmartre and the village of St. Denis, several places where they say St. Denis stopped with his head in his hands after it had been cut off at Montmartre. The Protestants will call those things lies; and where is the proof that all the

other things called miracles are not as great lies as those?

CABALISM. Christ, say those Cabalists, came in the *fulness of time.* And pray what is the fulness of time? The words admit of no idea. They are perfectly cabalistical. Time is a word invented to describe to our conception a greater or less portion of eternity. It may be a minute, a portion of eternity measured by the vibration of a pendulum of a certain length; it may be a day, a year, a hundred, or a thousand years, or any other quantity. Those portions are only greater or less comparatively.

The word "fulness" applies not to any of them. The idea of fulness of time cannot be conceived. A woman with child and ready for delivery, as Mary was when Christ was born, may be said to have gone her full time; but it is the woman that is full, not time.

It may also be said figuratively, in certain cases, that the times are full of events; but time itself is incapable of being full of itself. Ye hypocrites! learn to speak intelligible language.

It happened to be a time of peace when they say Christ was born; and what then? There had been many such intervals; and have been many such since. Time was no fuller in any of them than in the other.

If he were he would be fuller now than he ever was before. If he was full then he must be bursting now.

But peace or war have relation to circumstances, and not to time; and those Cabalists would be at as much loss to make out any meaning to fulness of circumstances as to fulness of time. And if they could, it would be fatal; for fulness of circumstances would mean when there are not more circumstances to happen; and fulness of time when there is no more time to follow.

Christ, therefore, like every other person, was neither in the fulness of one nor the other.

But though we cannot conceive the idea of fulness of time, because we cannot have conception of a time when there shall be no time; nor of fulness of circumstance, because we cannot conceive a state of existence to be without circumstances; we can often see, after a thing is past, if any circumstance necessary to give the utmost activity and success to that thing was wanting at the time that thing took place.

If such a circumstance was wanting, we may be certain that the thing which took place was not a thing of God's ordaining; whose work is always perfect, and His means perfect means. They tell us that Christ was the Son of God: in that case, he would have known everything; and he came upon earth to

make known the will of God to man throughout the whole earth.

If this had been true, Christ would have known and would have been furnished with all the possible means of doing it; and would have instructed mankind, or at least his apostles, in the use of such of the means as they could use themselves to facilitate the accomplishment of the mission; consequently he would have instructed them in the art of printing, for the press is the tongue of the world, and without which, his or their preaching was less than a whistle compared to thunder.

Since then he did not do this, he had not the means necessary to the mission; and consequently had not the mission.

They tell us in the book of Acts (ii.), a very stupid story of the apostles' having the gift of tongues; and *cloven tongues of fire* descended and sat upon each of them. Perhaps it was this story of cloven tongues that gave rise to the notion of slitting jackdaws' tongues to make them talk. Be that however as it may, the gift of tongues, even if it were true, would be but of little use without the art of printing.

I can sit in my chamber, as I do while writing this, and by the aid of printing can send the thoughts I am writing through the greatest part of Europe, to

the East Indies, and over all North America, in a few months. Jesus Christ and his apostles could not do this. They had not the means, and the want of means detects the pretended mission.

There are three modes of communication. Speaking, writing and printing. The first is exceedingly limited. A man's voice can be heard but a few yards of distance; * and his person can be but in one place. Writing is much more extensive; but the thing written cannot be multiplied but at great expense, and the multiplication will be slow and incorrect.

Were there no other means of circulating what priests call the Word of God (the Old and New Testament) than by writing copies, those copies could not be purchased at less than forty pounds sterling each; consequently, but few people could purchase them, while the writers could scarcely obtain a livelihood by it.

But the art of printing changes all the cases, and opens a scene as vast as the world. It gives to man a sort of divine attribute. It gives to him mental omnipresence. He can be everywhere and at the same instant; for wherever he is read he is mentally there.

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* Paine, of course, had no prophetic idea of the telephone or of the principle of radio transmission.—*Editor.*

The case applies not only against the pretended mission of Christ and his apostles but against everything that priests call the Word of God, and against all those who pretend to deliver it; for had God ever delivered any verbal word, He would have taught the means of communicating it. The one without the other is inconsistent with the wisdom we conceive of the Creator.

Genesis iii. 21 tells us that *God made coats of skin and clothed* Adam and Eve. It was infinitely more important that man should be taught the art of printing, than that Adam should be taught to make a pair of leather breeches, or his wife a petticoat.

There is another matter, equally striking and important, that connects itself with these observations against this pretended Word of God, this manufactured book called *Revealed Religion.* We know that whatever is of God's doing is unalterable by man beyond the laws which the Creator has ordained. We cannot make a tree grow with the root in the air and the fruit in the ground; we cannot make iron into gold nor gold into iron; we cannot make rays of light shine forth rays of darkness, nor darkness shine forth light.

If there were such a thing as a Word of God, it would possess the same properties which all His other

works do. It would resist destructive alteration. But we see that the book which they call the Word of God has not this property. That book says (Genesis i. 27), *"So God created man in His own image;"* but the printer can make it say, *So man created God in his own image.*

The words are passive to every transposition of them, or can be annihilated and others put in their places. This is not the case with anything that is of God's doing; and, therefore, this book called the Word of God, tried by the same universal rule which every other of God's works within our reach can be tried by, proves itself to be a forgery.

The bishop says, that *"miracles are proper proofs of a divine mission."* Admitted. But we know that men, and especially priests, can tell lies and call them miracles. It is therefore necessary that the thing called a miracle be proved to be true, and also to be miraculous, before it can be admitted as proof of the thing called revelation.

The bishop must be a bad logician not to know that one doubtful thing cannot be admitted as proof that another doubtful thing is true. It would be like attempting to prove a liar not to be a liar by the evidence of another who is as great a liar as himself.

Though Jesus Christ, by being ignorant of the art of printing, shows he had not the means necessary to a divine mission, and consequently had no such mission, it does not follow that if he had known that art the divinity of what they call his mission would be proved thereby, any more than it proved the divinity of the man who invented printing.

Something therefore beyond printing, even if he had known it, was necessary *as a miracle,* to have proved that what he delivered was the Word of God; and this was that the book in which that Word should be contained, which is now called the Old and New Testament, should possess the miraculous property, distinct from all human books, of resisting alteration.

This would be not only a miracle, but an ever existing and universal miracle; whereas, those which they tell us of, even if they had been true, were momentary and local; they would leave no trace behind, after the lapse of a few years, of having ever existed; but this would prove, in all ages and in all places, the book to be divine and not human, as effectually and as conveniently as aquafortis proves gold to be gold by not being capable of acting upon it, and detects all other metals and all counterfeit composition, by dissolving them.

Since then the only miracle capable of every proof is wanting, and which everything that is of a divine origin possesses; all the tales of miracles, with which the Old and New Testament are filled, are fit only for impostors to preach and fools to believe.

PROSPECT PAPERS

Remarks on R. Hall's Sermon

THIS and the following sixteen papers were contributed in 1804 to "The Prospect"; or "View of the Moral World," a monthly New York publication, edited by Elihu Palmer, a prominent Paine convert. Palmer was a native of Connecticut and a graduate of Dartmouth College, who entered the Presbyterian ministry, but left it on finding that he could not subscribe to the Presbyterian doctrine. He and Paine founded the first purely Theistic Society of record, in 1804.

Palmer wrote of Paine that he was "probably the most useful man that ever existed on the face of the earth." It was soon after his return to America from Europe that Paine became associated with Palmer, in founding a Theistic Church, and in becoming an occasional contributor to "The Prospect." Palmer, who was totally blind, died suddenly in Philadelphia, in 1804, and his widow was materially assisted by Paine, whom she had nursed through a severe illness.

ROBERT HALL, a Protestant minister in England, preached and published a sermon against what he called *Modern Infidelity*. A copy of it was sent to a gentleman in America with a request for his opinion thereon. That gentleman sent it to a friend of his in New York, with the request written on the cover—and this last gentleman sent it to Thomas Paine, who wrote the following observations on the blank leaf at the end of the sermon:

The preacher of the foregoing sermon speaks a great deal about *infidelity*, but does not define what

he means by it. His harangue is a general exclamation. Everything, I suppose, that is not in his creed is infidelity with him, and his creed is infidelity with me. Infidelity is believing falsely. If what Christians believe is not true, it is the Christians that are the infidels.

The point between Deists and Christians is not about doctrine, but about fact—for if the things believed by the Christians to be facts are not facts, the doctrine founded thereon falls of itself. There is such a book as the Bible, but is it a fact that the Bible is *revealed religion?* The Christians cannot prove it is. They put tradition in place of evidence, and tradition is not proof. If it were, the reality of witches could be proved by the same kind of evidence.

The Bible is a history of the times of which it speaks, and history is not revelation. The obscene and vulgar stories in the Bible are as repugnant to our ideas of the purity of a divine Being, as the horrid cruelties and murders it ascribes to Him are repugnant to our ideas of His justice. It is the reverence of the *Deists* for the attributes of the DEITY that causes them to reject the Bible.

Is the account which the Christian Church gives of the person called Jesus Christ a fact, or a fable?

Is it a fact that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost? The Christians cannot prove it, for the case does not admit of proof.

The things called miracles in the Bible, such for instance as raising the dead, admitted *if true* of occular demonstration, but the story of the conception of Jesus Christ in the womb is a case beyond miracle, for it did not admit of demonstration.

Mary, the reputed mother of Jesus, who must be supposed to know best, never said so herself, and all the evidence of it is that the book of Matthew says that Joseph dreamed an angel told him so. Had an old maid two or three hundred years of age brought forth a child it would have been much better presumptive evidence of a supernatural conception than Matthew's story of Joseph's dream about his young wife.

Is it a fact that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, and how is it proved? If a God, he could not die, and as a man he could not redeem. How then is this redemption proved to be fact? It is said that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, commonly called an apple, and thereby subjected himself and all his posterity forever to eternal damnation.

This is worse than visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the *third and fourth genera-*

tions. But how was the death of Jesus Christ to affect or alter the case? Did God thirst for blood? If so, would it not have been better to have crucified Adam at once upon the forbidden tree, and made a new man? Would not this have been more creator-like than repairing the old one?

Or did God, when He made Adam, supposing the story to be true, exclude Himself from the right of making another? or impose on Himself the necessity of breeding from the old stock? Priests should first prove facts, and deduce doctrines from them afterwards. But instead of this they assume everything and prove nothing. Authorities drawn from the Bible are no more than authorities drawn from other books, unless it can be proved that the Bible is revelation.

The story of the redemption will not stand examination. That man should redeem himself from the sin of eating an apple by committing a murder on Jesus Christ, is the strangest system of religion ever set up. Deism is perfect purity compared with this.

It is an established principle with the Quakers not to shed blood: suppose then all Jerusalem had been Quakers when Christ lived, there would have been nobody to crucify him, and in that case, if man is redeemed by his blood, which is the belief of the

Church, there could have been no redemption; and the people of Jerusalem must all have been damned because they were too good to commit murder. The Christian system of religion is an outrage on common sense. Why is man afraid to think?

Why do not the Christians, to be consistent, make saints of Judas and Pontius Pilate? For they were the persons who accomplished the acts of salvation. The merit of a sacrifice, if there can be any merit in it, was never in the thing sacrificed, but in the persons offering up the sacrifice—and, therefore, Judas and Pontius Pilate ought to stand first on the calendar of saints.*

THOMAS PAINE.

OF THE WORD "RELIGION," AND OTHER WORDS OF UNCERTAIN SIGNIFICATION

THE word *religion* is a word of forced application when used with respect to the worship of God. The root of the word is the Latin verb *ligo*, to tie or bind. From *ligo*, comes *religo*, to tie or bind over again, to make more fast—from *religo*, comes the

* This observation is repeated by the Anglo-Jewish statesman, Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield) in his "Political Biography."—*Editor.*

substantive *religio*, which, with the addition of *n* makes the English substantive *religion*.

The French use the word properly: when a woman enters a convent she is called a *novitiate*, that is, she is upon trial or probation. When she takes the oath, she is called a *religieuse*, that is, she is tied or bound by that oath to the performance of it. We use the word in the same kind of sense when we say we will religiously perform the promise that we make.

But the word, without referring to its etymology, has, in the manner it is used, no definite meaning, because it does not designate what religion a man is of. There is the religion of the Chinese, of the Tartars, of the Bramins, of the Persians, of the Jews, of the Turks, etc.

The word Christianity is equally as vague as the word religion. No two sectaries can agree what it is. It is *lo here* and *lo there*. The two principal sectaries, Papists and Protestants, have often cut each other's throats about it.

The Papists call the Protestants heretics, and the Protestants call the Papists idolators. The minor sectaries have shown the same spirit of rancor, but as the civil law restrains them from blood, they content themselves with preaching damnation against each other.

The word *protestant* has a positive signification in the sense it is used. It means protesting against the authority of the Pope, and this is the only article in which the Protestants agree. In every other sense, with respect to religion, the word protestant is as vague as the word Christian.

When we say an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, a Quaker, we know what those persons are, and what tenets they hold; but when we say a "Christian," we know he is not a Jew nor a Mahometan, but we know not if he be a trinitarian or an anti-trinitarian, a believer in what is called the immaculate conception, or a disbeliever, a man of seven sacraments, or of two sacraments, or of none. The word "Christian" describes what a man is not, but not what he is.

The word *theology,* from *Theos,* the Greek word for God, and meaning the study and knowledge of God, is a word that strictly speaking belongs to Theists or Deists, and not to the Christians. The head of the Christian Church is the person called Christ, but the head of the Church of the Theists, or Deists, as they are more commonly called (from *Deus,* the Latin word for God), is God Himself; and therefore the word "Theology" belongs to that Church which has Theos or God for its head, and not to the

Christian Church which has the person called Christ for its head. Their technical word is *Christianity*, and they cannot agree on what Christianity is.

The words *revealed religion* and *natural religion* also require explanation. They are both invented terms, contrived by the Church for the support of priestcraft. With respect to the first, there is no evidence of any such thing, except in the universal revelation that God has made of His power, His wisdom, His goodness, in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of creation.

We have no cause for ground from anything we behold in those works to suppose God would deal partially by mankind, and reveal knowledge to one nation and withhold it from another, and then damn them for not knowing it. The sun shines an equal quantity of light all over [around?] the world—and mankind in all ages and countries are endued with reason, and blessed with sight, to read the visible works of God in the creation, and so intelligent is this book that *he that runs may read.*

We admire the wisdom of the ancients, yet they had no Bibles nor books called "revelation." They cultivated the reason that God gave them, studied Him in His works, and arose to eminence.

As to the Bible, whether true or fabulous, it is a history, and history is not a revelation. If Solomon had seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines, and if Samson slept in Delilah's lap, and she cut his hair off, the relation of those things is mere history that needed no revelation from heaven to tell it; neither does it need any revelation to tell us that Samson was a fool for his pains, and Solomon too.

As to the expressions so often used in the Bible, that *the word of the Lord* came to such an one, or such an one, it was the fashion of speaking in those times, like the expression used by a Quaker, that the *spirit moveth him*, or that used by priests, that they *have a call*. We ought not to be deceived by phrases because they are ancient. But if we admit the supposition that God would condescend to reveal Himself in words, we ought not to believe it would be in such idle and profligate stories as are in the Bible; and it is for this reason, among others which our reverence to God inspires, that the Deists deny that the book called the Bible is the Word of God, or that it is revealed religion.

With respect to the term *natural religion*, it is upon the face of it, the opposite of artificial religion, and it is impossible for any man to be certain that what is called *revealed religion* is not artificial.

Man has the power of making books, inventing stories of God, and calling them revelation, or the Word of God. The Koran exists as an instance that this can be done, and we must be credulous indeed to suppose that this is the only instance and Mahomet the only impostor. The Jews could match him, and the Church of Rome could overmatch the Jews. The Mahometans believe the Koran, the Christians believe the Bible, and it is education makes all the difference.

Books, whether Bibles or Korans, carry no evidence of being the work of any other power than man. It is only that which man cannot do that carries the evidence of being the work of a superior power. Man could not invent and make a universe—he could not invent nature, for nature is of divine origin. It is the laws by which the universe is governed.

When, therefore, we look through nature up to nature's God, we are in the right road of happiness, but when we trust to books as the Word of God, and confide in them as revealed religion, we are afloat on the ocean of uncertainty, and shatter into contending factions. The term, therefore, *natural religion*, explains itself to be *divine religion*, and the term *revealed religion* involves in it the suspicion of being *artificial*.

To show the necessity of understanding the meaning of words, I will mention an instance of a minister, I believe of the Episcopalian Church of Newark, in [New] Jersey. He wrote and published a book, and entitled it "An Antidote to Deism." An antidote to *Deism* must be *Atheism*. It has no other antidote—for what can be an antidote to the belief of a God, but the disbelief of God? Under the tuition of such pastors, what but ignorance and false information can be expected? T. P.

Of Cain and Abel

THE story of Cain and Abel is told in Genesis iv. Cain was the elder brother and Abel the younger, and Cain killed Abel. The Egyptian story of Typhon and Osiris, and the Jewish story in Genesis of Cain and Abel, have the appearance of being the same story differently told, and that it came originally from Egypt.

In the Egyptian story, Typhon and Osiris are brothers; Typhon is the elder and Osiris the younger, and Typhon kills Osiris. The story is an allegory on Darkness and Light: Typhon, the elder brother, is Darkness because Darkness was supposed to be more

ancient than Light: Osiris is the Good Light who rules during the summer months, and brings forth the fruits of the earth, and is the favorite, as Abel is said to have been; for which Typhon hates him; and when the winter comes, and cold and darkness overspread the earth, Typhon is represented as having killed Osiris out of malice, as Cain is said to have killed Abel.

The two stories are alike in their circumstances and their event, and are probably but the same story. What corroborates this opinion is that the fifth chapter of Genesis historically contradicts the reality of the story of Cain and Abel in the fourth chapter; for though the name of *Seth*, a son of Adam, is mentioned in the fourth chapter, he is spoken of in the fifth chapter as if he was the first born of Adam. The chapter begins thus:

"This is the book of the *generations* of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God created He him; male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son, in his own likeness and after his image, and called his name *Seth.*" The rest of the chapter goes on with the genealogy.

Anybody reading this chapter cannot suppose there were any sons born before *Seth.* The chapter begins with what is called *the creation of Adam,* and calls itself the book of the *generations of Adam,* yet no mention is made of such persons as Cain and Abel.

One thing however is evident on the face of these two chapters, which is that the same person is not the writer of both; the most blundering historian could not have committed himself in such a manner.

Though I look on everything in the first ten chapters of Genesis to be fiction, yet fiction historically told should be consistent; whereas these two chapters are not. The Cain and Abel of Genesis appear to be no other than the ancient Egyptian story of Typhon and Osiris, the Darkness and the Light, which answered very well as an allegory without being believed as a fact.

The Tower of Babel

THE story of the tower of Babel is told in Genesis xi. It begins thus: "And the whole earth [it was but a very little part of it they knew] was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the East, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

And they said one to another, *Go to,* let us make brick and burn them thoroughly, and they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

"And they said, *Go to,* let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded.

"And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. *Go to,* let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

"So [that is, by that means] the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off building the city."

This is the story, and a very foolish, inconsistent story it is. In the first place, the familiar and irreverend manner in which the Almighty is spoken of in this chapter is offensive to a serious mind.

As to the project of building a tower whose top should reach to heaven, there never could be a people so foolish as to have such a notion; but to represent the Almighty as jealous of the attempt, as the writer

of the story has done, is adding profanation to folly. "*Go to,*" say the builders, "let us build us a tower whose top shall reach to heaven." "*Go to,*" says God, "let us go down and confound their language."

This quaintness is indecent, and the reason given for it is worse, for, "now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do." This is representing the Almighty as jealous of their getting into heaven. The story is too ridiculous, even as a fable, to account for the diversity of languages in the world, for which it seems to have been intended.

As to the project of confounding their language for the purpose of making them separate, it is altogether inconsistent; because instead of producing this effect, it would, by increasing their difficulties, render them more necessary to each other, and cause them to keep together. Where could they go to better themselves?

Another observation upon this story is, the inconsistency of it with respect to the opinion that the Bible is the Word of God given for the information of mankind; for nothing could so effectually prevent such a word from being known by mankind as confounding their language. The people, who after this spoke different languages, could no more understand such a Word generally than the builders of Babel could

understand one another. It would have been necessary, therefore, had such Word ever been given or intended to be given, that the whole earth should be, as they say it was at first, of one language and of one speech, and that it should never have been confounded.

The case, however, is, that the Bible will not bear examination in any part of it, which it would do if it was the Word of God. Those who most believe it are those who know least about it, and priests always take care to keep the inconsistent and contradictory parts out of sight.

T. P.

Of the Religion of Deism Compared With the Christian Religion, and the Superiority of the Former Over the Latter

EVERY person, of whatever religious denomination he may be, is a DEIST in the first article of his Creed. Deism, from the Latin word *Deus*, God, is the belief of a God, and this belief is the first article of every man's creed.

It is on this article, universally consented to by all mankind, that the Deist builds his church, and here he rests. Whenever we step aside from this article,

by mixing it with articles of human invention, we wander into a labyrinth of uncertainty and fable, and become exposed to every kind of imposition by pretenders to revelation.

The Persian shows the Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster, the lawgiver of Persia, and calls it the divine law; the Bramin shows the *Shaster*, revealed, he says, by God to Brama, and given to him out of a cloud; the Jew shows what he calls the Law of Moses, given, he says, by God, on the Mount Sinai; the Christian shows a collection of books and epistles, written by nobody knows who, and called the New Testament; and the Mahometan shows the Koran, given, he says, by God to Mahomet: each of these calls itself *revealed religion*, and the *only* true Word of God, and this the followers of each profess to believe from the habit of education, and each believes the others are imposed upon.

But when the divine gift of reason begins to expand itself in the mind and calls man to reflection, he then reads and contemplates God and His works, and not in the books pretending to be revelation. The creation is the Bible of the true believer in God. Everything in this vast volume inspires him with sublime ideas of the Creator. The little and paltry, and often obscene, tales of the Bible sink into

wretchedness when put in comparison with this mighty work.

The Deist needs none of those tricks and shows called miracles to confirm his faith, for what can be a greater miracle than the creation itself and his own existence?

There is a happiness in Deism, when rightly understood, that is not to be found in any other system of religion. All other systems have something in them that either shock our reason, or are repugnant to it, and man, if he thinks at all, must stifle his reason in order to force himself to believe them.

But in Deism our reason and our belief become happily united. The wonderful structure of the universe, and everything we behold in the system of the creation, prove to us, far better than books can do, the existence of a God, and at the same time proclaim His attributes.

It is by the exercise of our reason that we are enabled to contemplate God in His works, and imitate Him in His way. When we see His care and goodness extended over all His creatures, it teaches us our duty toward each other, while it calls forth our gratitude to Him. It is by forgetting God in His works, and running after the books of pretended revelation, that man has wandered from the straight path

of duty and happiness, and become by turns the victim of doubt and the dupe of delusion.

Except in the first article in the Christian creed, that of believing in God, there is not an article in it but fills the mind with doubt as to the truth of it, the instant man begins to think. Now every article in a creed that is necessary to the happiness and salvation of man ought to be as evident to the reason and comprehension of man as the first article is, for God has not given us reason for the purpose of confounding us, but that we should use it for our own happiness and His glory.

The truth of the first article is proved by God Himself, and is universal; for *the creation is of itself demonstration of the existence of a Creator.* But the second article, that of God's begetting a son, is not proved in like manner, and stands on no other authority than that of a tale.

Certain books in what is called the New Testament tell us that Joseph dreamed that the angel told him so, (Matthew i, 20): "And behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."

The evidence upon this article bears no comparison with the evidence upon the first article, and therefore is not entitled to the same credit, and ought not to be made an article in a creed, because the evidence of it is defective, and what evidence there is is doubtful and suspicious. We do not believe the first article on the authority of books, whether called Bibles or Korans, nor yet on the visionary authority of dreams, but on the authority of God's own visible works in the creation.

The nations who never heard of such books, nor of such people as Jews, Christians or Mahometans, believe the existence of a God as fully as we do, because it is self-evident. The work of man's hands is a proof of the existence of man as fully as his personal appearance would be.

When we see a watch, we have as positive evidence of the existence of a watchmaker, as if we saw him; and in like manner the creation is evidence to our reason and our senses of the existence of a Creator. But there is nothing in the works of God that is evidence that He begat a son, nor anything in the system of creation that corroborates such an idea, and, therefore, we are not authorized in believing it.

What truth there may be in the story that Mary, before she was married to Joseph, was kept by one

of the Roman soldiers, and was with child by him, I leave to be settled between the Jews and the Christians. The story, however, has probability on its side, for her husband Joseph suspected and was jealous of her, and was going to put her away. "Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was going to put her away, privately." (Matt. i, 19).

I have already said that "whenever we step aside from the first article (that of believing in God), we wander into a labyrinth of uncertainty," and here is evidence of the justness of the remark, for it is impossible for us to decide who was Jesus Christ's father.

But presumption can assume anything, and therefore it makes Joseph's dream to be of equal authority with the existence of God, and to help it on calls it revelation. It is impossible for the mind of man in its serious moments, however it may have been entangled by education, or beset by priestcraft, not to stand still and doubt upon the truth of this article and of its creed.

But this is not all. The second article of the Christian creed having brought the son of Mary into the world (and this Mary, according to the chronological tables, was a girl of only fifteen years of age when this son was born), the next article goes on to account

for his being begotten, which was that when he grew a man he should be put to death, to expiate, they say, the sin that Adam brought into the world by eating an apple or some kind of forbidden fruit.

But though this is the creed of the Church of Rome, from whence the Protestants borrowed it, it is a creed which that Church has manufactured of itself, for it is not contained in nor derived from, the book called the New Testament.

The four books called the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which give, or pretend to give, the birth, sayings, life, preaching, and death of Jesus Christ, make no mention of what is called the fall of man; nor is the name of Adam to be found in any of those books, which it certainly would be if the writers of them believed that Jesus was begotten, born and died for the purpose of redeeming mankind from the sin which Adam had brought into the world. Jesus never speaks of Adam himself, of the Garden of Eden, nor of what is called the fall of man.*

But the Church of Rome having set up its new religion, which it called Christianity, invented the

* Paine here repeats his citations from St. Augustine, Origen and Maimonides, as to the mystical interpretation of the story in Genesis.—*Editor.*

creed which it named the Apostles's Creed, in which it calls Jesus the *only son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary;* things of which it is impossible that man or woman can have any idea, and consequently no belief but in words; and for which there is no authority but the idle story of Joseph's dream in the first chapter of Matthew, which any designing impostor or foolish fanatic might make.

It then manufactured the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, and the allegorical tree of life and the tree of knowledge into real trees, contrary to the belief of the first Christians, and for which there is not the least authority in any of the books of the New Testament; for in none of them is there any mention made of such place as the Garden of Eden, nor of anything that is said to have happened there.

But the Church of Rome could not erect the person called Jesus into a Savior of the world without making the allegories in the book of Genesis into fact, though the New Testament, as before observed, gives no authority for it. All at once the allegorical tree of knowledge became, according to the Church, a real tree, the fruit of it real fruit, and the eating of it sinful.

As priestcraft was always the enemy of knowledge,

because priestcraft supports itself by keeping people in delusion and ignorance, it was consistent with its policy to make the acquisition of knowledge a real sin.

The Church of Rome having done this, it then brings forward Jesus the son of Mary as suffering death to redeem mankind from sin, which Adam, it says, had brought into the world by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But as it is impossible for reason to believe such a story, because it can see no reason for it, nor have any evidence of it, the Church then tells us we must not regard our reason, but must *believe*, as it were, and that through thick and thin, as if God had given man reason like a plaything, or a rattle, on purpose to make fun of him.

Reason is the forbidden tree of priestcraft and may serve to explain the allegory of the forbidden tree of knowledge, for we may reasonably suppose the allegory had some meaning and application at the time it was invented. It was the practise of the Eastern nations to convey their meaning by allegory, and relate it in the manner of fact. Jesus followed the same method, yet nobody every supposed the allegory or parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, the ten Virgins, etc., were facts.

Why then should the tree of knowledge, which is far more romantic in idea than the parables in the New Testament are, be supposed to be a real tree? * The answer to this is, because the Church could not make its new-fangled system, which it called Christianity, hold together without it. To have made Christ to die on account of an allegorical tree would have been too barefaced a fable.

But the account, as it is given of Jesus in the New Testament, even visionary as it is, does not support the creed of the Church that he died for the redemption of the world. According to that account he was crucified and buried on the Friday, and rose again in good health on the Sunday morning, for we do not hear that he was sick. This cannot be called dying, and is rather making fun of death than suffering it.

There are thousands of men and women also, who if they could know they should come back again in good health in about thirty-six hours, would prefer such kind of death for the sake of the experiment, and to know what the other side of the grave was.

* The remark of the Emperor Julian on the story of the Tree of Knowledge is worth observing. "If," said he, "there ever had been, or could be, a Tree of Knowledge, instead of God forbidding man to eat thereof, it would be that of which he would order him to eat the most."—*Author.*

Why then should that which would be only a voyage of curious amusement to us be magnified into merit and suffering in him? If a God, he could not suffer death, for immortality cannot die, and as a man his death could be no more than the death of any other person.

The belief of the redemption of Jesus Christ is altogether an invention of the Church of Rome, not the doctrine of the New Testament. What the writers of the New Testament attempted to prove by the story of Jesus is the *resurrection of the same body from the grave,* which was the belief of the Pharisees, in opposition to the Sadducees (a sect of Jews) who denied it.

Paul, who was brought up a Pharisee, labors hard at this point, for it was the creed of his own Pharisaical Church: I Corinthians xv is full of supposed cases and assertions about the resurrection of the same body, but there is not a word in it about redemption. This chapter makes part of the funeral services of the Episcopal Church.

The dogma of the redemption is the fable of priestcraft invented since the time the New Testament was compiled, and the agreeable delusion of it suited with the depravity of immoral livers. When men are taught to ascribe all their crimes and vices to the

temptations of the devil, and to believe that Jesus, by his death, rubs all off, and pays their passage to heaven gratis, they become as careless in morals as a spendthrift would be of money were he told that his father had engaged to pay off all his scores.

It is a doctrine not only dangerous to morals in this world, but to our happiness in the next world, because it holds out such a cheap, easy, and lazy way of getting to heaven, as has a tendency to induce men to hug the delusion of it to their own injury.

But there are times when men have serious thoughts, and it is at such times, when they begin to think, that they begin to doubt the truth of the Christian religion; and well they may, for it is too fanciful and too full of conjecture, inconsistency, improbability and irrationality to afford consolation to the thoughtful man. His reason revolts against his creed. He sees that none of its articles are proved, or can be proved.

He may believe that such a person as is called Jesus (for Christ was not his name) was born and grew to be a man, because it is no more than a natural and probable case. But who is to prove he is the son of God, that he was begotten by the Holy Ghost? Of these things there can be no proof; and that which admits not of proof, and is against the laws of prob-

ability and the order of nature, which God Himself has established, is not an object for belief. God has not given man reason to embarrass him, but to prevent his being imposed upon.

He may believe that Jesus was crucified, because many others were crucified, but who is to prove he was crucified *for the sins of the world?* This article has no evidence, not even in the New Testament; and if it had, where is the proof that the New Testament, in relating things neither probable nor provable, is to be believed as true?

When an article in a creed does not admit of proof nor of probability, the salvo is to call it revelation; but this is only putting one difficulty in the place of another, for it is as impossible to prove a thing to be revelation as it is to prove that Mary was gotten with child by the Holy Ghost.

Here it is that the religion of Deism is superior to the Christian religion. It is free from all those invented and torturing articles that shock our reason or injure our humanity, and with which the Christian religion abounds. Its creed is pure, and sublimely simple. It believes in God, and there it rests.

It honors reason as the choicest gift of God to man, and the faculty by which he is enabled to contemplate the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator dis-

played in the creation; and reposing itself on His protection, both here and hereafter, it avoids all presumptuous beliefs, and rejects, as the fabulous inventions of men, all books pretending to revelation.

T. P.

To the Members of the Society, Styling Itself the Missionary Society

The New York Gazette *of the sixteenth (August) contains the following article—"On Tuesday, a committee of the Missionary Society, consisting chiefly of distinguished Clergymen, had an interview, at the City Hotel, with the chiefs of the Osage tribe of Indians, now in this city (New York) to whom they presented a Bible, together with an address, the object of which was to inform them that this* good book *contained the* will and laws *of the* Great Spirit."

IT is to be hoped some humane person will, on account of our people on the frontiers, as well as of the Indians, undeceive them with respect to the present the missionaries have made them, and which they call a *good book*, containing, they say, *the will and laws of the* Great Spirit. Can those mission-

aries suppose that the assassination of men, women and children, and sucking infants, related in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, etc., and blasphemously said to be done by the command of the Lord, the Great Spirit, can be edifying to our Indian neighbors, or advantageous to us?

Is not the Bible warfare the same kind of warfare as the Indians themselves carry on, that of indiscriminate destruction, and against which humanity shudders? Can the horrid examples and vulgar obscenity with which the Bible abounds improve the morals or civilize the manners of the Indians? Will they learn sobriety and decency from drunken Noah and beastly Lot; or will their daughters be edified by the example of Lot's daughters?

Will the prisoners they take in war be treated the better by their knowing the horrid story of Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces like a block of wood, or David's putting them under harrows of iron?

Will not the shocking accounts of the destruction of the Canaanites, when the Israelites invaded their country, suggest the idea that we may serve them in the same manner, or the accounts stir them up to do the like to our people on the frontiers, and then justify the assassination by the Bible the missionaries

have given them? Will those missionary societies never leave off doing mischief?

In the accounts which this missionary committee give of their interview, they make the chief of the Indians to say, that, "as neither he nor his people could read it, he begged that some good white man might be sent to instruct them."

It is necessary the general Government keep a strict eye over those missionary societies, who, under the pretense of instructing the Indians, send spies into their country to find out the best lands. No society should be permitted to have intercourse with the Indian tribes, nor send any person among them, but with the knowledge and consent of the Government.

The present Administration [Jefferson's] has brought the Indians into a good disposition, and is improving them in the moral and civil comforts of life; but if these self-created societies be suffered to interfere, and send their speculating missionaries among them, the laudable object of government will be defeated. Priests, we know, are not remarkable for doing anything gratis; they have in general some scheme in everything they do, either to impose on the ignorant, or derange the operations of government.

A FRIEND TO THE INDIANS.

Of the Sabbath-Day in Connecticut

THE word Sabbath, means REST; that is, cessation from labor, but the stupid Blue Laws * of Connecticut make a labor of rest, for they oblige a person to sit still from sunrise to sunset on a Sabbath-day, which is hard work. Fanaticism made those laws, and hypocrisy pretends to reverence them, for where such laws prevail hypocrisy will prevail also.

One of those laws says, "No person shall run on a Sabbath-day, nor walk in his garden, nor elsewhere; but reverently to and from meeting." These fanatical hypocrites forgot that God dwells not in temples made with hands, and that the earth is full of His glory.

One of the finest scenes and subjects of religious contemplation is to walk into the woods and fields, and survey the works of the God of the Creation. The wide expanse of heaven, the earth covered with verdure, the lofty forest, the waving corn, the magnificent roll of mighty rivers, and the murmuring melody of the cheerful brooks, are scenes that inspire the mind with gratitude and delight.

But this the gloomy Calvinist of Connecticut must not behold on a Sabbath-day. Entombed within the

* They were called Blue Laws because they were originally printed on blue paper.—*Author.*

walls of his dwelling, he shuts from his view the Temple of Creation. The sun shines no joy to him. The gladdening voice of nature calls on him in vain. He is deaf, dumb and blind to everything around that God has made. Such is the Sabbath-day of Connecticut.

From whence could come this miserable notion of devotion? It comes from the gloominess of the Calvinistic creed. If men love darkness rather than light, because their works are evil, the ulcerated mind of a Calvinist, who sees God only in terror, and sits brooding over the scenes of hell and damnation, can have no joy in beholding the glories of the creation. Nothing in that mighty and wondrous system accords with his principles or his devotion.

He sees nothing there that tells him that God created millions on purpose to be damned, and that the children of a span long are born to burn forever in hell.* The creation preaches a different doctrine to this. We there see that the care and goodness of God is extended impartially over all the creatures He has made. The worm of the earth shares His protection

* This reference to the damnation of infants "a span long" was ascribed to the Rev. Dr. Nathaniel Emmons, for fifty-four years minister of the Franklin, Massachusetts, Congregational Church, and other extreme predestinarians in America.—*Editor.*

equally with the elephant of the desert. The grass that springs beneath our feet grows by His bounty as well as the cedars of Lebanon.

Everything in the creation reproaches the Calvinist with unjust ideas of God, and disowns the hardness and ingratitude of his principles. Therefore he shuns the sight of them on a Sabbath-day.

AN ENEMY TO CANT AND IMPOSITION.

OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON says: "The difference between the style of the Old and New Testament is so remarkable, that one of the greatest sects in the primitive times, did, upon this very ground, found their heresy of two Gods, the one evil, fierce and cruel, whom they called the God of the Old Testament; the other good, kind and merciful, whom they called the God of the New Testament; so great a difference is there between the representations that are given of God in the books of the Jewish and Christian religion, as to give, at least, some color and pretense to an imagination of two Gods." Thus far Tillotson.

But the case was that as the Church had picked out several passages from the Old Testament, which she most absurdly and falsely calls prophecies of Jesus

Christ (whereas there is no prophecy of any such person, as anyone may see by examining the passages and the cases to which they apply), she was under the necessity of keeping up the credit of the Old Testament, because if that fell the other would soon follow, and the Christian system of faith would soon be at an end.

As a book of morals, there are several parts of the New Testament that are good; but they are no other than what had been preached in the Eastern world several hundred years before Christ was born. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, who lived five hundred years before the time of Christ, says, *Acknowledge thy benefits by the return of benefits, but never revenge injuries.*

The clergy in Popish countries were cunning enough to know that if the Old Testament was made public, the fallacy of the New, with respect to Christ, would be detected, and they prohibited the use of it, and always took it away wherever they found it.

The Deists, on the contrary, always encouraged the reading it, that people might see and judge for themselves, that a book so full of contradictions and wickedness could not be the Word of God, and that we dishonor God by ascribing it to Him.

A TRUE DEIST.

Hints Toward Forming A Society for Inquiring into the Truth or Falsehood of Ancient History, so Far as History is Connected With Systems of Religion Ancient and Modern

IT has been customary to class history into three divisions, distinguished by the names of Sacred, Profane and Ecclesiastical. By the first is meant the Bible; by the second, the history of nations, of men and things; and by the third, the history of the church and its priesthood.

Nothing is more easy than to give names, and, therefore, mere names signify nothing unless they lead to the discovery of some cause for which that name was given. For example, *Sunday* is the name given to the first day of the week, in the English language, and it is the same in the Latin, that is, it has the same meaning (*Dies solis*), and also in the German and in several other languages.

Why then was this name given to that day? Because it was the day dedicated by the ancient world to the luminary which in the English we call the Sun, and therefore the day *Sun-day*, or the day of the Sun; as in the like manner we call the second day Monday, the day dedicated to the Moon.

Here the name *Sunday* leads to the cause of its being called so, and we have visible evidence of the fact, because we behold the Sun from whence the name comes; but this is not the case when we distinguish one part of history from another by the name of *Sacred.*

All histories have been written by men. We have no evidence, nor any cause to believe, that any have been written by God. That part of the Bible called the Old Testament, is the history of the Jewish nation, from the time of Abraham, which begins in Genesis xi, to the downfall of that nation by Nebuchadnezzar, and is no more entitled to be called sacred than any other history. It is altogether the contrivance of priestcraft that has given it that name. So far from its being *sacred,* it has not the appearance of being true in many of the things it relates.

It must be better authority than a book which any impostor might make, as Mahomet made the Koran, to make a thoughtful man believe that the sun and moon stood still, or that Moses and Aaron turned the Nile, which is larger than the Delaware, into blood; and that the Egyptian magicians did the same. These things have too much the appearance of romance to be believed for fact.

It would be of use to inquire, and ascertain the time, when that part of the Bible called the Old Testament first appeared. From all that can be collected there was no such book till after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, and that is the work of the Pharisees of the Second Temple. How they came to make Kings xix and Isaiah xxxvii word for word alike, can only be accounted for by their having no plan to go by, and not knowing what they were about.

The same is the case with respect to the last verses in II Chronicles, and the first verses in Ezra; they also are word for word alike, which shows that the Bible has been put together at random.

But besides these things there is great reason to believe we have been imposed upon with respect to the antiquity of the Bible, and especially with respect to the books ascribed to Moses. Herodotus, who is called the father of history, and is the most ancient historian whose works have reached to our time, and who traveled into Egypt, conversed with the priests, historians, astronomers and learned men of that country, for the purpose of obtaining all the information of it he could, and who gives an account of the ancient state of it, makes no mention of such a man as Moses, though the Bible makes him to have been the greatest hero there, nor of any one circumstance

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New Rochelle, N. Y.

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mentioned in the book of Exodus respecting Egypt, such as turning the rivers into blood, the dust into lice, the death of the first born throughout all the land of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh and all his host, things which could not have been a secret in Egypt, and must have been generally known, had they been facts; and, therefore, as no such things were known in Egypt, nor any such man as Moses at the time Herodotus was there, which is about 2,200 years ago, it shows that the account of these things in the books ascribed to Moses is a made story of later times; that is, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, and that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him.

With respect to the cosmogony, or account of the Creation, in Genesis i, of the Garden of Eden in chapter ii, and of what is called the Fall of Man in chapter iii, there is something concerning them we are not historically acquainted with. In none of the books of the Bible, after Genesis, are any of these things mentioned or even alluded to.

How is this to be accounted for? The obvious inference is that either they were not known, or not believed to be facts, by the writers of the other books of the Bible, and that Moses is not the author of the chapters where these accounts are given.

The next question on the case is how did the Jews come by these notions, and at what time were they written? To answer this question we must first consider what the state of the world was at the time the Jews began to be a people, for the Jews are but a modern race compared with the antiquity of other nations.

At the time there were, even by their own account, but thirteen Jews or Israelites in the world, *Jacob and his twelve sons,* and four of these were bastards, the nations of Egypt, Chaldea, Persia and India, were great and populous, abounding in learning and science, particularly in the knowledge of astronomy, of which the Jews were always ignorant.

The chronological tables mention that eclipses were observed at Babylon above two thousand years before the Christian era, which was before there was a single Jew or Israelite in the world.

All those ancient nations had their cosmogonies, that is, their accounts how the creation was made, before there was such people as Jews or Israelites. An account of these cosmogonies of India and Persia is given by Henry Lord, Chaplain to the East India Company at Surat, and published in London in 1630. The writer of this has seen a copy of the edition of 1630, and made extracts from it. The work, which

is now scarce, was dedicated by Lord to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We know that the Jews were carried captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and remained in captivity several years, when they were liberated by Cyrus, King of Persia. During their captivity they would have had an opportunity of acquiring some knowledge of the cosmogony of the Persians, or at least of getting some ideas how to fabricate one to put at the head of their own history after their return from captivity. This will account for the cause, for some cause there must have been, that no mention nor reference is made to the cosmogony in Genesis in any of the books of the Bible supposed to have been written before the captivity, nor is the name of Adam to be found in any of those books.

The books of Chronicles were written after the return of the Jews from captivity, for the third chapter of the first book gives a list of all the Jewish kings from David to Zedekiah, who was carried captive into Babylon, and to four generations beyond the time of Zedekiah. In Chron. i, 1, the name of Adam is mentioned, but not in any book in the Bible written before that time, nor could it be, for Adam and Eve are names taken from the cosmogony of the Persians.

Henry Lord, in his book, written from Surat and dedicated, as I have already said, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, says that in the Persian cosmogony the name of the first man was *Adamoh*, and of the woman *Hevah*.* From hence comes the Adam and Eve of the book of Genesis. In the cosmogony of India, of which I shall speak in a future number, the name of the first man was *Pourous*, and of the woman *Parcoutee*. We want a knowledge of the Sanscrit language of India to understand the meaning of the names, and I mention it in this place, only to show that it is from the cosmogony of Persia, rather than that of India, that the cosmogony in Genesis has been fabricated by the Jews, who returned from captivity by the liberality of Cyrus, King of Persia.

There is, however, reason to conclude, on the authority of Sir William Jones, who resided several years in India, that these names were very expressive in the language to which they belonged, for in speaking of this language, he says (see the Asiatic Researches), "The Sanscrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of wonderful structure; it is more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either."

* In an English edition of the Bible, in 1583, the first woman is called Hevah.—*Author.*

These hints, which are intended to be continued, will serve to show that a society for inquiring into the ancient state of the world, and the state of ancient history, so far as history is connected with systems of religion, ancient and modern, may become a useful and instructive institution.

There is good reason to believe we have been in great error with respect to the antiquity of the Bible, as well as imposed upon by its contents. Truth ought to be the object of every man; for without truth there can be no real happiness to a thoughtful mind, or any assurance of happiness hereafter. It is the duty of man to obtain all the knowledge he can, and then make the best use of it.

T. P.

To Mr. Moore, of New York, Commonly Called Bishop Moore *

I HAVE read in the newspapers your account of the visit you made to the unfortunate General Hamilton, and of administering to him a ceremony of your church which you call the *Holy Communion.*

I regret the fate of General Hamilton, and I so far hope with you that it will be a warning to thoughtless man not to sport away the life that God has given him; but with respect to other parts of your letter I think it very reprehensible, and betrays great ignorance of what true religion is. But you are a priest, you get your living by it, and it is not your worldly interest to undeceive yourself.

After giving an account of your administering to the deceased what you call the Holy Communion, you add, "By reflecting on this melancholy event let the humble believer be encouraged ever to hold fast that precious faith which is the *only source of true consolation* in the last extremity of nature. Let the infidel

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* Rev. Dr. Benjamin Moore was rector of Trinity Church, New York, in 1800, and became an Episcopal Bishop in 1801. He died in 1816. For a time he was president of Columbia, then King's College. The General Hamilton referred to is, of course, Alexander Hamilton, who was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr, in 1804.—*Editor.*

be persuaded to abandon his opposition to the Gospel."

To show you, Sir, that your promise of consolation from Scripture has no foundation to stand upon, I will cite to you one of the greatest falsehoods upon record, and which was given, as the record says, for the purpose, and as a promise, of consolation.

In the epistle called the First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, iv, the writer consoles the Thessalonians as to the case of their friends who were already dead.

He does this by informing them, and he does it he says, by the word of the Lord (a most notorious falsehood), that the general resurrection of the dead and the ascension of the living will be in his and their days; that their friends will then come to life again; that the dead in Christ will rise first.—"Then WE (says he, ver. 17, 18) which *are alive and remain* shall be *caught up* together with THEM *in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air,* and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore *comfort* one another with these words."

Delusion and falsehood cannot be carried higher than they are in this passage. You, Sir, are but a novice in the art. The words admit of no equivoca-

tion. The whole passage is in the first person and the present tense, "*We* which *are alive.*"

Had the writer meant a future time, and a distant generation, it must have been in the third person and the future tense. "*They* who *shall then* be alive." I am thus particular for the purpose of nailing you down to the text, that you may not ramble from it, nor put other constructions upon the words than they will bear, which priests are very apt to do.

Now, Sir, it is impossible for serious man, to whom God has given the divine gift of reason, and who employs that reason to reverence and adore the God that gave it, it is, I say, impossible for such a man to put confidence in a book that abounds with fable and falsehood as the New Testament does. This passage is but a sample of what I could give you.

You call on those whom you style "*infidels,*" (and they in return might call you an idolater, a worshiper of false gods, a preacher of false doctrines), "to abandon their opposition to the Gospel." Prove, Sir, the Gospel to be true, and the opposition will cease of itself; but until you do this (which we know you cannot do) you have no right to expect they will notice your call. If by *infidels* you mean *Deists* (and you must be exceedingly ignorant of the origin of the word Deist, and know but little of *Deus,* to put that

construction upon it), you will find yourself overmatched if you begin to engage in a controversy with them.

Priests may dispute with priests, and sectaries with sectaries, about the meaning of what they *agree* to call Scripture, and end as they began; but when you engage with a Deist you must keep to fact. Now, Sir, you cannot prove a single article of your religion to be true, and we tell you so publicly. Do it *if you can.* The Deistical article, *the belief of a God,* with which your creed begins, has been borrowed by your church from the ancient Deists, and even this article you dishonor by putting a *dream-begotten* phantom * which you call His son, over His head, and treating God as if he was superannuated.

Deism is the only profession of religion that admits of worshiping and reverencing God in purity, and the only one on which the thoughtful mind can repose with undisturbed tranquillity. God is almost

* The first chapter of Matthew, relates that Joseph, the betrothed husband of Mary, dreamed that the angel told him that his intended bride was with child by the Holy Ghost. It is not every husband, whether carpenter or priest, that can be so easily satisfied, for lo! it was a dream. Whether Mary was in a dream when this was done we are not told. It is, however, a comical story. There is no woman living can understand it.—*Author.*

forgotten in the Christian religion. Everything, even the creation, is ascribed to the son of Mary.

In religion, as in everything else, perfection consists in simplicity. The Christian religion of Gods within Gods, like wheels within wheels, is like a complicated machine that never goes right, and every projector in the art of Christianity is trying to mend it. It is its defects that have caused such a number and variety of tinkers to be hammering at it, and still it goes wrong.

In the visible world no time-keeper can go equally true with the sun; and in like manner, no complicated religion can be equally true with the pure and unmixed religion of Deism.

Had you not offensively glanced at a description of men whom you call by a false name, you would not have been troubled nor honored with this address; neither has the writer of it any desire or intention to enter into controversy with you. He thinks the temporal establishment of your church politically unjust and offensively unfair; but with respect to religion itself, distinct from temporal establishments, he is happy in the enjoyment of his own, and he leaves you to make the best you can of yours.

A MEMBER OF THE DEISTICAL CHURCH.

To John Mason,*

ONE OF THE MINISTERS OF THE SCOTCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW YORK, WITH REMARKS ON HIS ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT HE MADE TO THE LATE GENERAL HAMILTON

"COME *now, let us* REASON *together, saith the Lord.*" This is one of the passages you quoted from your Bible, in your conversation with General Hamilton, as given in your letter, signed with your name, and published in the *Commercial Advertiser*, and other New York papers, and I requote the passage to show that your *text* and your *religion* contradict each other.

It is impossible to reason upon things *not comprehensible by reason;* and therefore, if you keep to your text, which priests seldom do (for they are generally either above it, or below it, or forget it), you must admit a religion to which reason can apply, and this certainly is not the Christian religion.

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* Rev. Dr. Mason was an eloquent Presbyterian divine of New York, who died in 1829. He and Alexander Hamilton were particular friends. After being shot by Burr, and realizing that he was mortally wounded, Hamilton wished Dr. Mason to administer the sacrament to him, but as this was contrary to Presbyterian tenets, Bishop Moore performed the service.—*Editor.*

There is not an article in the Christian religion that is cognizable by reason. The Deistical article of your religion, *the belief of a God,* is no more a Christian article than it is a Mahometan article. It is an universal article, common to all religions, and which is held in greater purity by Turks than by Christians; but the Deistical Church is the only one which holds it in real purity; because that Church acknowledges no copartnership with God. It believes in Him solely; and knows nothing of sons, married virgins, nor ghosts. It holds all these things to be the fables of priestcraft.

Why then do you talk of reason, or refer to it, since your religion has nothing to do with reason, nor reason with that? You tell people as you told Hamilton, that they must have *faith!* Faith in what? You ought to know that before the mind can have faith in anything, it must either know it as a fact, or see cause to believe it on the probability of that kind of evidence that is cognizable by reason.

But your religion is not within either of these cases; for, in the first place, you cannot prove it to be fact; and in the second place, you cannot support it by reason, not only because it is not cognizable by reason, but because it is contrary to reason.

What reason can there be in supposing, or believing that God put *Himself to death to satisfy Himself, and be revenged on the devil on account of Adam?* For, tell the story which way you will, it comes to this at last.

As you can make no appeal to reason in support of an unreasonable religion, you then (and others of your profession) bring yourselves off by telling people they must not believe in reason but in *revelation.*

This is the artifice of habit without reflection. It is putting *words* in the place of *things;* for do you not see that when you tell people to believe in revelation, you must first prove that what you *call* revelation, *is* revelation; and as you cannot do this, you put the *word,* which is easily spoken, in the place of the *thing* you cannot prove.

You have no more evidence that your Gospel is revelation than the Turks have that their Koran is revelation, and the only difference between them and you is, that they preach their delusion and you preach yours.

In your conversation with General Hamilton, you say to him, "The *simple truths* of the Gospel which require *no abstruse investigation,* but faith in the veracity of *God who cannot lie,* are best suited to your present condition."

If those matters you call "*simple truths*" are what you call them, and require no abstruse investigation, they would be so obvious that reason would easily comprehend them; yet the doctrine you preach at other times is, *that the mysteries of the Gospel are beyond the reach of reason.*

If your first position be true, that they are *simple truths,* priests are unnecessary, for we do not want preachers to tell us the sun shines; and if your second be true, the case, as to effect, is the same, for it is waste of money to pay a man to explain unexplainable things, and loss of time to listen to him.

That *God cannot lie,* is no advantage to your argument, because it is no proof that priests can not, or that the Bible does not. Did not Paul lie when he told the Thessalonians, that the general resurrection of the dead would be in his lifetime, and that he should go up alive along with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air? I Thes. iv, 17.

You spoke of what you call, "*the precious blood of Christ.*" This savage style of language belongs to the priests of the Christian religion. The professors of this religion say they are shocked at the accounts of human sacrifices of which they read in the histories of some countries. Do they not see that their own religion is founded on a human sacrifice,

the blood of man, of which their priests talk like so many butchers?

It is no wonder the Christian religion has been so bloody in its effects, for it began in blood, and many thousands of human sacrifices have since been offered on the altar of the Christian religion.

It is necessary to the character of a religion, as being true, and immutable as God Himself is, that the evidence of it be equally the same through all periods of time and circumstance.

This is not the case with the Christian religion, nor with that of the Jews that preceded it (for there was a time and that within the knowledge of history, when these religions did not exist); nor is it the case with any religion we know of but the religion of Deism. In this the evidences are eternal and universal. *"The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge."* * But all other religions are made to

* This Psalm (19) which is a *Deistical Psalm*, is so much in the manner of some parts of the book of Job (which is not a book of the Jews, and does not belong to the Bible), that it has the appearance of having been translated into Hebrew from the same language in which the book of Job was originally written, and brought by the Jews from Chaldea or Persia, when they returned from captivity. The contemplation of the heavens made a great part of the religious devotion of the Chaldeans and Per-

arise from some local circumstance, and are introduced by some temporary trifle which its partizans call a miracle, but of which there is no proof but the story of it.

The Jewish religion, according to the history of it, began in a *wilderness*, and the Christian religion in a *stable*. The Jewish books tell us of wonders exhibited upon Mount Sinai. It happened that nobody lived there to contradict the account.

The Christian books tell us of a star that hung over the *stable* at the birth of Jesus. There is no star there now, nor any person living that saw it. But all the stars in the heavens bear eternal evidence to the truth of Deism. It did not begin in a stable, nor in a wilderness. It began everywhere. The theater of the universe is the place of its birth.

As adoration paid to any being but God Himself is idolatry, the Christian religion by paying adoration to a man, born of a woman called Mary, belongs to the idolatrous class of religions; consequently the consolation drawn from it is delusion.

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sians, and their religious festivals were regulated by the progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. But the Jews knew nothing about the heavens, or they would not have told the foolish story of the sun's standing still upon a hill, and the moon in a valley. What could they want the moon for in the day time?—*Author.*

Between you and your rival in communion ceremonies, Dr. Moore of the Episcopal Church, you have, in order to make yourselves appear of some importance, reduced General Hamilton's character to that of a feeble-minded man, who in going out of the world wanted a passport from a priest. Which of you was first or last applied to for this purpose is a matter of no consequence.

The man, Sir, who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral life, and endeavors to do good, does not trouble himself about priests when his hour of departure comes, nor permits priests to trouble themselves about him. They are in general mischievous beings where character is concerned; a consultation of priests is worse than a consultation of physicians.

A MEMBER OF THE DEISTICAL CONGREGATION.

On Deism, and the Writings of Thomas Paine *

THE following reflections, written last winter, were occasioned by *certain* expressions in some of the public papers against Deism and the writings of Thomas Paine on that subject.

"*Great is Diana of the Ephesians,*" was the cry of the people of Ephesus (Acts xix, 28); and the cry of "*our holy religion*" has been the cry of superstition in some instances, and of hypocrisy in others, from that day to this.

The Brahmin, the follower of Zoroaster, the Jew, the Mahometan, the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, the Protestant Church, split into several hundred contradictory sectaries, preaching in some instances damnation against each other, all cry out, "*our holy religion.*"

The Calvinist, who damns children of a span long to hell to burn forever for the glory of God (and this is called Christianity), and the Universalist who preaches that all shall be saved and none shall be

* This article was published anonymously in *The Prospect*, in 1804. Knowing, as we do, that Paine wrote it, one or two paragraphs savor of egotism; but it should be remembered that the author was being furiously assailed in religious publications and pulpits because of his avowed Deism.—*Editor.*

damned (and this also is called Christianity), boast alike of their *holy religion* and their Christian faith.

Something more therefore is necessary than mere *cry* and wholesale assertion, and that something is TRUTH; and as inquiry is the road to truth, he that is opposed to inquiry is not a friend to truth.

The God of truth is not the God of fable; when, therefore, any book is introduced into the world as the Word of God, and made a groundwork for religion, it ought to be scrutinized more than other books to see if it bear evidence of being what it is called. Our reverence to God demands that we do this, lest we ascribe to God what is not His, and our duty to ourselves demands it lest we take fable for fact, and rest our hope of salvation on a false foundation.

It is not our calling a book *holy* that makes it so, any more than our calling a religion holy that entitles it to the name. Inquiry therefore is necessary in order to arrive at truth. But inquiry must have some principle to proceed on, some standard to judge by, superior to human authority.

When we survey the works of creation, the revolutions of the planetary system, and the whole economy of what is called nature, which is no other than the laws the Creator has prescribed to matter, we see un-

erring order and universal harmony reigning throughout the whole. No one part contradicts another. The sun does not run against the moon, nor the moon against the sun, nor the planets against each other. Everything keeps its appointed time and place.

This harmony in the works of God is so obvious, that the farmer of the field, though he cannot calculate eclipses, is as sensible of it as the philosophical astronomer. He sees the God of order in every part of the visible universe.

Here, then, is the standard to which everything must be brought that pretends to be the work or Word of God, and by this standard it must be judged, independently of anything and everything that man can say or do. His opinion is like a feather in the scale compared with the standard that God Himself has set up.

It is, therefore, by this standard that the Bible and all other books pretending to be the Word of God (and there are many of them in the world) must be judged, and not by the opinions of men or the decrees of ecclesiastical councils. These have been so contradictory that they have often rejected in one council what they had voted to be the Word of God in another; and admitted what had been before rejected.

In this state of uncertainty in which we are, and which is rendered still more uncertain by the numerous contradictory sectaries that have sprung up since the time of Luther and Calvin, what is man to do? The answer is easy. Begin at the root—begin with the Bible itself. Examine it with the utmost strictness. It is our duty so to do.

Compare the parts with each other, and the whole with the harmonious, magnificent order that reigns throughout the visible universe, and the result will be, that if the same Almighty wisdom that created the universe dictated also the Bible, the Bible will be as harmonious and as magnificent in all its parts, and in the whole, as the universe is.

But if, instead of this, the parts are found to be discordant, contradicting in one place what is said in another (as in II Sam. xxiv, 1, and I Chron. xxi, 1, where the same action is ascribed to God in one book and to Satan in the other), abounding also in idle and obscene stories, and representing the Almighty as a passionate, whimsical Being, continually changing His mind, making and unmaking His own works as if He did not know what He was about, we may take it for certainty that the Creator of the universe is not the author of such a book, that it is not the

Word of God, and that to call it so is to dishonor His name.

The Quakers, who are a people more moral and regular in their conduct than the people of other sectaries, and generally allowed so to be, do not hold the Bible to be the Word of God. They call it *a history of the times,* and a bad history it is, and also a history of bad men and of bad actions, and abounding with bad examples.

For several centuries past the dispute has been about doctrines. It is now about fact. Is the Bible the Word of God, or is it not? For until this point is established, no doctrine drawn from the Bible can afford real consolation to man, and he ought to be careful he does not mistake delusion for truth. This is a case that concerns all men alike.

There has always existed in Europe, and also in America, since its establishment, a numerous description of men (I do not here mean the Quakers) who did not, and do not believe the Bible to be the Word of God. These men never formed themselves into an established society, but are to be found in all the sectaries that exist, and are more numerous than any, perhaps equal to all, and are daily increasing. From *Deus,* the Latin word for God, they have been denominated *Deists,* that is, believers in God. It is the

most honorable appellation that can be given to man, because it is derived immediately from the Deity. It is not an artificial name like Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc., but is a name of sacred signification, and to revile it is to revile the name of God.

Since then there is so much doubt and uncertainty about the Bible, some asserting and others denying it to be the Word of God, it is best that the whole matter come out. It is necessary for the information of the world that it should.

A better time cannot offer than while the Government,* patronizing no one sect or opinion in preference to another, protects equally the rights of all; and certainly every man must spurn the idea of an ecclesiastical tyranny, engrossing the rights of the press, and holding it free only for itself.

While the terrors of the Church, and the tyranny of the State, hung like a pointed sword over Europe, men were commanded to believe what the Church told them, or go to the stake. All inquiries into the authenticity of the Bible were shut out by the Inquisition. We ought therefore to suspect that a great mass of information respecting the Bible, and the introduction of it into the world, has been suppressed by the

* This was written during the administration of President Jefferson.—*Editor.*

united tyranny of Church and State, for the purpose of keeping people in ignorance, and which ought to be known.

The Bible has been received by the Protestants on the authority of the Church of Rome, and on no other authority. It is she that has said it is the Word of God. We do not admit the authority of that Church with respect to its pretended *infallibility*, its manufactured miracles, its setting itself up to forgive sins, its amphibious doctrine of transubstantiation, etc.; and we ought to be watchful with respect to any book introduced by her, or her ecclesiastical councils, and called by her the Word of God: and the more so, because it was by propagating that belief and supporting it by fire and faggot that she kept up her temporal power.

That the belief of the Bible does no good in the world, may be seen by the irregular lives of those, as well priests as laymen, who profess to believe it to be the Word of God, and the moral lives of the Quakers who do not. It abounds with too many ill examples to be made a rule for moral life, and were a man to copy after the lives of some of its most celebrated characters he would come to the gallows.

Thomas Paine has written to show that the Bible is not the Word of God, that the books it contains were

not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, that it is an anonymous book, and that we have no authority for calling it the Word of God, or for saying it was written by inspired penmen, since we do not know who the writers were.

This is the opinion not only of Thomas Paine, but of thousands and tens of thousands of the most respectable characters in the United States and in Europe. These men have the same right to their opinions as others have to contrary opinions, and the same right to publish them. Ecclesiastical tyranny is not admissible in the United States.

With respect to morality, the writings of Thomas Paine are remarkable for purity and benevolence; and though he often enlivens them with touches of wit and humor, he never loses sight of the real solemnity of his subject. No man's morals, either with respect to his Maker, himself, or his neighbor, can suffer by the writings of Thomas Paine.

It is now too late to abuse Deism, especially in a country where the press is free, *or where free presses can be established.* It is a religion that has God for its patron and derives its name from Him. The thoughtful mind of man, wearied with the endless contentions of sectaries against sectaries, doctrines against doctrines, and priests against priests, finds

its repose at last in the contemplative belief and worship of one God and the practise of morality; for as Pope wisely says,

He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Of the Books of the New Testament

ADDRESS TO THE BELIEVERS IN THE BOOK CALLED THE SCRIPTURES

THE New Testament contains twenty-seven books, of which four are called Gospels; one called the Acts of the Apostles; fourteen called the Epistles of Paul; one of James; two of Peter; three of John; one of Jude; one called the Revelation.

None of those books have the appearance of being written by the persons whose names they bear, neither do we know who the authors were. They come to us on no other authority than the Church of Rome, which the Protestant priests, especially those of New England, call the *Whore of Babylon.*

This Church, or to use their own vulgar language, *this whore,* appointed sundry councils to be held, to compose creeds for the people, and to regulate Church

affairs. Two of the principal of these councils were that of Nice, and of Laodicea (names of the places where the councils were held) about three hundred and fifty years after the time that Jesus is said to have lived. Before this time there was no such book as the New Testament.

But the Church could not well go on without having something to show, as the Persians showed the Zend-Avesta, revealed they say by God to Zoroaster; the Bramins of India, the Shaster, revealed, they say, by God to Brama, and given to him out of a dusky cloud; the Jews, the books they call the Law of Moses, given they say also out of a cloud on Mount Sinai.

The Church set about forming a code for itself out of such materials as it could find or pick up. But where they got those materials, in what language they were written, or whose handwriting they were, or whether they were originals or copies, or on what authority they stood, we know nothing of, nor does the New Testament tell us.

The Church was resolved to have a New Testament, and as, after the lapse of more than three hundred years, no handwriting could be proved or disproved, the Church, which like former impostors had then gotten possession of the State, had everything its own way. It invented creeds, such as that called the

Apostles' Creed, the Nicean Creed, the Athanasian Creed, and out of the loads of rubbish that were presented it voted four to be Gospels, and others to be Epistles, as we now find them arranged.

Of those called Gospels, above forty were presented, each pretending to be genuine. Four only were voted in, and entitled: the Gospel *according* to St. Matthew—the Gospel *according* to St. Mark—the Gospel *according* to St. Luke—the Gospel *according* to St. John.

This word *according*, shows that those books have not been written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, but according to some accounts or traditions, picked up concerning them. The word "according" means agreeing with, and necessarily includes the idea of two things, or two persons.

We cannot say, *The Gospel written by Matthew according to Matthew;* but we might say, the Gospel of some other person according to what was reported to have been the opinion of Matthew. Now we do not know who those other persons were, nor whether what they wrote accorded with anything that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John might have said. There is too little evidence, and too much contrivance, about those books to merit credit.

The next book after those called Gospels, is that called the Acts of the Apostles. This book is anonymous; neither do the councils that compiled or contrived the New Testament tell us how they came by it. The Church, to supply this defect, say it was written by Luke, which shows that the Church and its priests have not compared that called the Gospel according to St. Luke and the Acts together, for the two contradict each other.

The book of Luke, xxiv, makes Jesus ascend into heaven the very same day that it makes him rise from the grave. The book of Acts, i, 3, says that he remained on earth forty days after his crucifixion. There is no believing what either of them says.

The next to the book of Acts is that entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle * to the Romans." This is not an epistle, or letter, written by Paul or signed by him. It is an epistle, or letter, written by a person who signs himself TERTIUS, and sent, as it is said in the end, by a servant woman called Phebe. The last chapter, ver. 22, says, "I Tertius, who wrote this

* According to the criterion of the Church, Paul was not an apostle; that appellation being given only to those called the Twelve. Two sailors belonging to a man-of-war got into a dispute upon this point, whether Paul was an apostle or not, and they agreed to refer it to the boatswain, who decided very *canonically* that Paul was an *acting* apostle but not *rated*.—*Author.*

epistle, salute you." Who Tertius or Phebe was, we know nothing of.

The epistle is not dated. The whole of it is written in the first person, and that person is Tertius, not Paul. But it suited the Church to ascribe it to Paul. There is nothing in it that is interesting except it be to contending and wrangling sectaries. The stupid metaphor of the potter and the clay is in chapter ix.

The next book is entitled "The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians." This, like the former, is not an epistle written by Paul, nor signed by him. The conclusion of the epistle says, "The first epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, by Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, and Timotheus."

The second epistle entitled "The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians," is in the same case with the first. The conclusion of it says, "It was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas."

A question may arise upon these cases, which is, are these persons the writers of the epistles originally, or are they the writers and attestors of copies sent to the councils who compiled the code or canon of the New Testament? If the epistles had been

dated this question could be decided; but in either of the cases the evidences of Paul's handwriting and of their being written by him is wanting, and, therefore, there is no authority for calling them Epistles of Paul. We know not whose epistles they were, nor whether they are genuine or forged.

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians." It contains six short chapters, yet the writer of it says, vi, 11, "Ye see how large a letter I have written to you with my own hand. If Paul was the writer of this it shows he did not accustom himself to write long epistles; yet the epistle to the Romans and the first to the Corinthians contain sixteen chapters each; the second to the Corinthians and that to the Hebrews thirteen each.

There is something contradictory in these matters. But short as the epistle is, it does not carry the appearance of being the work or composition of one person. Chapter v, 2, says, "If ye be circumcised Christ shall avail you nothing." It does not say circumcision shall profit you nothing, but Christ shall profit you nothing. Yet in vi, 15, it says "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

These are not reconcilable passages, nor can contrivance make them so. The conclusion of the epistle

says it was written from Rome, but it is not dated, nor is there any signature to it, neither do the compilers of the New Testament say how they came by it. We are in the dark upon all these matters.

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians." Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus."

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians." Paul is not the writer. The conclusion of it says, "It was written to the Philippians from Rome by Epaphroditus." It is not dated. Query, were those men who wrote and signed those epistles journeymen Apostles, who undertook to write in Paul's name, as Paul is said to have preached in Christ's name?

The next is entitled, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians." Paul is not the writer. Doctor Luke is spoken of in this epistle as sending his compliments. "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you" (iv, 14). It does not say a word about his writing any Gospel. The conclusion of the epistle says, "Written from Rome to the Colossians by Tychicus and Onesimus."

The next is entitled, "The First and the Second Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians."

Either the writer of these epistles was a visionary enthusiast, or a direct impostor, for he tells the Thessalonians, and, he says, he tells them by the Word of the Lord, that the world will be at an end in his and their time; and after telling them that those who are already dead shall rise, he adds, iv, 17, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord."

Such detected lies as these, ought to fill priests with confusion, when they preach such books to be the Word of God. These two epistles are said in the conclusion of them to be written from Athens. They are without date or signature.

The next four epistles are private letters. Two of them are to Timothy, one to Titus and one to Philemon. Who they were, nobody knows.

The first to Timothy, is said to be written from Laodicea. It is without date or signature. The second to Timothy, is said to be written from Rome, and is without date or signature. The epistle to Titus is said to be written from Nicopolis in Macedonia. It is without date or signature. The epistle to Philemon is said to be written from Rome by Onesimus. It is without date.

The last epistle ascribed to Paul is entitled "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," and is said in the conclusion to be written from Italy, by Timothy. This Timothy (according to the conclusion of the epistle called the Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy) was Bishop of the Church of the Ephesians, and consequently this is not an epistle of Paul.

On what slender cobweb evidence do the priests and professors of the Christian religion hang their faith! The same degree of hearsay evidence, and that at third and fourth hand, would not, in a court of justice, give a man title to a cottage, and yet the priests of this profession presumptuously promise their deluded followers the Kingdom of Heaven. A little reflection would teach men that those books are not to be trusted to; that so far from there being any proof they are the Word of God, it is unknown who the writers of them were, or at what time they were written, within three hundred years after the reputed authors are said to have lived.

It is not the interest of priests, who get their living by them, to examine into the insufficiency of the evidence upon which those books were received by the popish councils who compiled the New Testament. But if Messrs. Linn and Mason would occupy themselves upon this subject (it signifies not which side

they take, for the event will be the same) they would be better employed than they were last Presidential election, in writing Jesuitical electioneering pamphlets. The very name of a priest attaches suspicion on to it the instant he becomes a dabbler in party politics.

The New England priests set themselves up to govern the state, and they are falling into contempt for so doing. Men who have their farms and their several occupations to follow, and have a common interest with their neighbors in the public prosperity and tranquillity of their country, neither want nor choose to be told by a priest who they shall vote for, nor how they shall conduct their temporal concerns.

The cry of the priests that the Church is in danger, is the cry of men who do not understand the interest of their own craft; for instead of exciting alarms and apprehensions for its safety, as they expect, it excites suspicion that the foundation is not sound, and that it is necessary to take down and build it on a surer foundation. Nobody fears for the safety of a mountain, but a hillock of sand may be washed away! Blow then, O ye priests, "The Trumpet in Zion," for the Hillock is in danger.

DETECTOR—P.

Biblical Blasphemy

THE Church tells us that the books of the Old and New Testament are divine revelation, and without this revelation we could not have true ideas of God.

The Deist, on the contrary, says that those books are *not* divine revelation; and that were it not for the light of reason and the religion of Deism, those books, instead of teaching us true ideas of God, would teach us not only false but blasphemous ideas of Him.

Deism teaches us that God is a God of truth and justice. Does the Bible teach the same doctrine? It does not.

The Bible says (Jeremiah xx, 5, 7) that God is a deceiver. "O Lord (says Jeremiah) thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed."

Jeremiah not only upbraids God with deceiving *him*, but, in iv, 9, he upbraids God with deceiving the people of Jerusalem. "Ah! Lord God (says he), surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, ye shall have peace, whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul."

In xv, 8, the Bible becomes more impudent, and calls God in plain language, a *liar*. "Wilt thou (says

Jeremiah to God) be altogether unto me as a liar and as waters that fail?"

Ezekiel xiv, 9, makes God to say—"If the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, *I the Lord have deceived that prophet.*" All this is downright blasphemy.

The prophet Micaiah, as he is called, II Chron. xviii, 18-21, tells another blasphemous story of God. "I saw," says he, "the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the hosts of Heaven standing on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, who shall entice Ahab, King of Israel, to go up and *fall* at Ramoth Gilead? And one spoke after this manner, and another after that manner.

"Then there came out a spirit [Micaiah does not tell us where he came from] and *stood before the Lord* [what an impudent fellow this spirit was] and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail; go out, and do even so."

We often hear of a gang of thieves plotting to rob and murder a man, and laying a plan to entice him out that they may execute their design, and we always feel shocked at the wickedness of such wretches; but

what must we think of a book that describes the Almighty acting in the same manner, and laying plans in heaven to entrap and ruin mankind? Our ideas of His justice and goodness forbid us to believe such stories, and therefore we say that a lying spirit has been in the mouth of the writers of the books of the Bible.

T. P

Biblical Anachronism

IN addition to the judicious remarks in your twelfth number,* on the absurd story of Noah's Flood, in Genesis vii, I send you the following:

The second verse makes God to say unto Noah, "Of every *clean* beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female, and of every beast that are *not clean*, by two, the male and his female."

Now, there was no such thing as beasts *clean* and *unclean* in the time of Noah. Neither were there any such people as Jews or Israelites at that time, to whom that distinction was a law. The law, called the Law of Moses, by which a distinction is made, beasts clean and unclean, was not until several hun-

* This was written to the editor of *The Prospect.—Editor.*

dred years after the time that Noah is said to have lived.

The story, therefore, detects itself, because the inventor forgot himself, by making God make use of an expression that could not be used at the time. The blunder is of the same kind as if a man, in telling a story about America a hundred years ago, should quote an expression from Mr. Jefferson's inaugural speech as if spoken by him at that time.

My opinion of this story is the same as what a man once said to another, who asked him in a drawling tone of voice, "Do you believe the account about No-ah?" The other replied in the same tone of voice, *ah-no*.

T. P.

Religious Intelligence

THE following publication, which has appeared in several newspapers in different parts of the United States, shows in the most striking manner the character and effects of religious fanaticism, and to what extravagant lengths it will carry its unruly and destructive operations.

We give it a place in *The Prospect*, because we think the perusal of it will be gratifying to our sub-

scribers; and, because, by exposing the true character of such frantic zeal, we hope to produce some influence upon the reason of man, and induce him to rise superior to such dreadful illusions. The judicious remarks at the end of this account were communicated to us by a very intelligent and faithful friend to the cause of Deism.

Extract from a Letter of the Rev. George Scott, of Mill Creek, Washington County, Pennsylvania, to Colonel William M'Farran, of Mount Bethel, Northampton County, Pa., dated November 3, 1802.

"My Dear Friend,

"We have wonderful times here. God has been pleased to visit this barren corner with abundance of His grace. The work began in a neighboring congregation, at a sacramental occasion, about the last of September. It did not make its appearance in my congregation till the first Tuesday of October. After society in the night there appeared an evident stir among the young people, but nothing of the appearance of what appeared afterwards.

"On Saturday evening following we had society, but it was dull throughout. On Sabbath-day one cried out, but nothing else extraordinary appeared. That evening I went part of the way to the Raccoon

congregation, where the sacrament of the supper was administered; but on Monday morning a very strong impression of duty constrained me to return to my congregation in the Flats, where the work was begun.

"We met in the afternoon at the meeting-house, where we had a warm society. In the evening we removed to a neighboring house, where we continued in society till midnight; numbers were falling all the time of society. After the people were dismissed, a considerable number stayed and sung hymns till perhaps two o'clock in the morning, when the work began, to the astonishment of all. Only five or six were left able to take care of the rest, to the number perhaps of near forty. They fell in all directions, on benches, on beds and on the floor.

"Next morning the people began to flock in from all quarters. One girl came early in the morning, but did not get within one hundred yards of the house before she fell powerless, and was carried in. We could not leave the house, and, therefore, continued society all that day and all that night, and on Wednesday morning I was obliged to leave a number of them on the spot.

"On Thursday evening we met again, when the work was amazing; about twenty persons lay to all

appearances dead for near two and a half hours, and a great number cried out with sore distress.

"Friday I preached at Mill Creek. Here nothing appeared more than an unusual solemnity. That evening we had society, where great numbers were brought under conviction, but none fell. On Sabbath-day, I preached at Mill Creek. This day and evening was a very solemn time but none fell.

"On Monday I went to attend presbytery, but returned on Thursday evening to the Flats, where society was appointed, when numbers were struck down. On Saturday evening we had society, and a very solemn time—about a dozen persons lay dead three and a half hours by the watch. On Sabbath a number fell, and we were obliged to continue all night in society, as we had done every evening we had met before.

"On Monday a Mr. Hughes preached at Mill Creek, but nothing extraordinary appeared, only a great deal of falling. We concluded to divide that evening into two societies, in order to accommodate the people. Mr. H. attended the one and I the other. Nothing strange appeared where Mr. H. attended; but where I attended God was present in the most wonderful manner. I believe there was not one present but was more or less affected. A considerable number

fell powerless, and two or three, after laying some time, recovered with joy, and spoke near half an hour.

"One, especially, declared in a surprising manner the wonderful view she had of the person, character and offices of Christ, with such accuracy of language that I was astonished to hear it. Surely this must be the work of God! On Thursday evening we had a lively society, but not much falling down. On Saturday we all went to the Cross Roads and attended a sacrament. Here were, perhaps, about four thousand people collected. The weather was uncomfortable; on the Sabbath-day it rained, and on Monday it snowed. We had thirteen ministers present.

"The exercises began on Saturday, and continued on night and day with little or no intermission. Great numbers fell; to speak within bounds, there were upwards of one hundred and fifty down at one time, and some of them continued three or four hours with but little appearance of life. Numbers came to, rejoicing, while others were deeply distressed. The scene was wonderful; the cries of the distressed, and the agonising groans, gave some faint representation of the awful cries and the bitter screams which will no doubt be extorted from the damned in hell.

"But what is to me the most surprising, of those who have been subjects among my people with whom

I have conversed, but three had any terrors of hell during their exercise. The principal cry is, O how long have I rejected Christ! O how often have I embrued my hands in his precious blood! O how often have I waded through his precious blood by stifling conviction! O this dreadful hard heart! O what a dreadful monster sin is! It was my sin that nailed Jesus to the cross! etc.

"The preaching is various; some thunder the terrors of the law—others preach the mild invitation of the Gospel. For my part, since the work began, I have confined myself chiefly to the doctrines of our fallen state by nature, and the way of recovery through Christ; opening the way of salvation; showing how God can be just and yet be the justifier of them that believe, and also the nature of true faith and repentance; pointing out the difference between true and false religion, and urging the invitations of the Gospel in the most engaging manner that I am master of, without any strokes of terror.

"The convictions and cries appear to be, perhaps, nearly equal under all these different modes of preaching, but it appears rather most when we preach on the fulness and freeness of salvation."

Remarks by Mr. Paine

IN the fifth chapter of Mark, we read a strange story of the devil getting into the swine after he had been turned out of a man, and as the freaks of the devil in *that* story and the tumbledown description in *this* are very much alike, the two stories ought to go together. [*Paine here quotes in full Mark* v, 1-13.]

The force of the imagination is capable of producing strange effects. When animal magnetism began in France, which was while Dr. Franklin was Minister to that country, the wonderful accounts given of the wonderful effects it produced on the persons who were under operation, exceeded anything related in the foregoing letter from Washington County. They tumbled down, fell into trances, roared and rolled about like persons supposed to be bewitched.

The Government, in order to ascertain the fact, or detect the imposition, appointed a committee of physicians to inquire into the case, and Dr. Franklin was requested to accompany them, which he did. The committee went to the operator's house, and the persons on whom an operation was to be performed were assembled. They were placed in the position in which they had been when under former operations, and *blindfolded.*

In a little time they began to show signs of agitation, and in the space of about two hours they went through all the frantic airs they had shown before; but the case was that no operation was performing upon them, neither was the operator in the room, for he had been ordered out of it by the physicians; but as the persons did not know this, they supposed him present and operating upon them. It was the effect of imagination only.

Dr. Franklin, in relating this account to the writer of this article, said that he thought the Government might as well have let it gone on, for that as imagination sometimes produced disorders it might also cure some. It is fortunate, however, that this falling down and crying out scene did not happen in New England a century ago, for if it had the preachers would have been hung for witchcraft, and in more ancient times the poor falling-down folks would have been supposed to be possessed of a devil, like the man in Mark, among the tombs. The progress that reason and Deism make in the world lessen the force of superstition and abate the spirit of persecution.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

PAINE wrote this essay in New York City, 1805, the reason for its composition being an agitation concerning the masonic fraternity. It was not published during his lifetime, but appeared as a pamphlet in 1818 with an anonymous preface stating that "This tract is a chapter belonging to the Third Part of 'The Age of Reason,' as will be seen by the references made in it to preceding articles, as forming part of the same work." Previously, in 1810, it had been published in fragmentary form by Madame Bonneville, Paine's executrix, who, having reverted to Roman Catholicism, erased certain references to the Christian religion. These, however, have been restored from the original manuscript, except a few lines which were rendered illegible. It has long been debated whether Paine himself was a Freemason. His knowledge of masonic rites, revealed in this article, is taken by some to indicate that he was.

IT is always understood that Freemasons have a secret which they carefully conceal; but from everything that can be collected from their own accounts of Masonry, their real secret is no other than their origin, which but few of them understand; and those who do, envelop it in mystery. The Society of Masons are distinguished into three classes or degrees. 1st. The Entered Apprentice. 2d. The Fellow Craft. 3d. The Master Mason.

The Entered Apprentice knows but little more of Masonry than the use of signs and tokens, and certain steps and words by which Masons can recognize each other without being discovered by a person who is

not a Mason. The Fellow Craft is not much better instructed in Masonry than the Entered Apprentice. It is only in the Master Mason's Lodge that whatever knowledge remains of the origin of Masonry is preserved and concealed.

In 1730, Samuel Pritchard, member of a constituted lodge in England, published a treatise entitled "Masonry Dissected"; and made oath before the Lord Mayor of London that it was a true copy. "Samuel Pritchard maketh oath that the copy hereunto annexed is a true and genuine copy in every particular." In his work he has given the catechism or examination, in question and answer, of the Apprentices, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason. There was no difficulty in doing this, as it is mere form.

In his introduction he says, "the original institution of Masonry consisted in the foundation of the liberal arts and sciences, but more especially in geometry, for at the building of the tower of Babel the art and mystery of Masonry was first introduced, and from thence handed down by Euclid, a worthy and excellent mathematician of the Egyptians; and he communicated it to Hiram, the Master Mason concerned in building Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem."

Besides the absurdity of deriving Masonry from the building of Babel, where, according to the story,

the confusion of languages prevented the builders understanding each other, and consequently of communicating any knowledge they had, there is a glaring contradiction in point of chronology in the account he gives.

Solomon's Temple was built and dedicated 1004 years before the Christian era; and Euclid, as may be seen in the tables of chronology, lived 277 before the same era. It was therefore impossible that Euclid could communicate anything to Hiram, since Euclid did not live till seven hundred years after the time of Hiram.

In 1783, Captain George Smith, inspector of the Royal Artillery Academy at Woolwich, in England, and Provincial Grand Master of Masonry for the County of Kent, published a treatise entitled, "The Use and Abuse of Freemasonry."

In his chapter of the antiquity of Masonry he makes it to be coeval with creation, "when," says he, "the sovereign architect raised on Masonic principles the beauteous globe, and commanded the master science, geometry, to lay the planetary world, and to regulate by its laws the whole stupendous system in just, unerring proportion, rolling round the central sun.

"But," continues he, "I am not at liberty publicly to undraw the curtain and openly to descant on this

head; it is sacred, and ever will remain so; those who are honored with the trust will not reveal it, and those who are ignorant of it cannot betray it."

By this last part of the phrase, Smith means the two inferior classes, the Fellow Craft and the Entered Apprentice, for he says in the next page of his work, "It is not every one that is barely initiated into Freemasonry that is intrusted with all the mysteries thereto belonging; they are not attainable as things of course, nor by every capacity."

The learned, but unfortunate Doctor Dodd, Grand Chaplain of Masonry, in his oration at the dedication of Freemason's Hall, London, traces Masonry through a variety of stages. "Masons," says he, "are well informed from their own private and interior records that the building of Solomon's Temple is an important era, from whence they derive many mysteries of their art.

"Now," says he, "be it remembered that this great event took place above one thousand years before the Christian era, and consequently more than a century before Homer, the first of the Grecian poets, wrote; and about five centuries before Pythagoras brought from the East his sublime system of truly Masonic instruction to illuminate our western world. But, remote as this period is, we date not from thence the

commencement of our art. For though it might owe to the wise and glorious King of Israel some of its many mystic forms and hieroglyphic ceremonies, yet certainly the art itself is coeval with man, the great subject of it.

"We trace," continues he, "its footsteps in the most distant, the most remote ages and nations of the world. We find it among the first and most celebrated civilizers of the East. We deduce it regularly from the first astronomers on the plains of Chaldea, to the wise and mystic kings and priests of Egypt, the sages of Greece, and the philosophers of Rome."

From these reports and declarations of Masons of the highest order in the institution, we see that Masonry, without publicly declaring so, lays claim to some divine communication from the Creator, in a manner different from, and unconnected with, the book which the Christians call the Bible; and the natural result from this is that Masonry is derived from some very ancient religion, wholly independent of and unconnected with that book.

To come then at once to the point, *Masonry* (as I shall show from the customs, ceremonies, hieroglyphics and chronology of Masonry) is derived and is the remains of the religion of the ancient Druids; who, like the magi of Persia and the priests of Heli-

opolis in Egypt, were priests of the sun. They paid worship to this great luminary, as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause, whom they styled "Time without limits."

The Christian religion and Masonry have one and the same common origin: both are derived from the worship of the sun. The difference between their origin is that the Christian religion is a parody on the worship of the sun, in which they put a man whom they call Christ in the place of the sun, and pay him the same adoration which was originally paid to the sun, as I have shown in the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion.*

In Masonry many of the ceremonies of the Druids are preserved in their original state, at least without any parody. With them the sun is still the sun; and his image in the form of the sun is the great emblematical ornament of Masonic lodges and Masonic dresses. It is the central figure on their aprons, and they wear it also pendant on the breast in their lodges and in their processions. It has the figure of a man,

* Referring to an unpublished portion of the work of which this chapter forms a part.—*American Editor,* 1819. This paragraph is omitted from the pamphlet copyrighted by Madame Bonneville in 1810, as also is the last sentence of the next paragraph.—*Editor.*

as at the head of the sun, as Christ is always represented.

At what period of antiquity, or in what nation, this religion was first established, is lost in the labyrinth of unrecorded time. It is generally ascribed to the ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians and Chaldeans, and reduced afterwards to a system regulated by the apparent progress of the sun through the twelve signs of zodiac by Zoroaster the lawgiver of Persia, from whence Pythagoras brought it into Greece. It is to these matters Dr. Dodd refers in the passage already quoted from his oration.

The worship of the sun as the great visible agent of a great invisible first cause, "Time without limits," spread itself over a considerable part of Asia and Africa, from thence to Greece and Rome, through all ancient Gaul, and into Britain and Ireland.

Smith, in his chapter on the antiquity of Masonry in Britain, says, that "notwithstanding the obscurity which envelops Masonic history in that country, various circumstances contribute to prove that Freemasonry was introduced into Britain about 1,030 years before Christ."

It cannot be Masonry in its present state that Smith here alludes to. The Druids flourished in Britain at the period he speaks of, and it is from them that

Masonry is descended. Smith has put the child in the place of the parent.

It sometimes happens, as well in writing as in conversation, that a person lets slip an expression that serves to unravel what he intends to conceal, and this is the case with Smith, for in the same chapter he says, "The Druids, when they committed anything to writing, used the Greek alphabet, and I am bold to assert that the most perfect remains of the Druids' rites and ceremonies are preserved in the customs and ceremonies of the Masons that are to be found existing among mankind. My brethren," says he, "may be able to trace them with greater exactness than I am at liberty to explain to the public."

This is a confession from a Master Mason, without intending it to be so understood by the public, that Masonry is the remains of the religion of the Druids; the reasons for the Masons keeping this a secret I shall explain in the course of this work.

As the study and contemplation of the Creator [is] in the works of the creation, the sun, as the great visible agent of that Being, was the visible object of the adoration of Druids; all their religious rites and ceremonies had reference to the apparent progress of the sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac, and his influence upon the earth.

The Masons adopt the same practises. The roof of their temples or lodges is ornamented with a sun, and the floor is a representation of the variegated face of the earth either by carpeting or mosaic work.

Freemasons' Hall, in Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, is a magnificent building, and cost upward of 12,000 pounds sterling. Smith, in speaking of this building, says (page 152), "The roof of this magnificent hall is in all probability the highest piece of finished architecture in Europe. In the center of this roof, a most resplendent sun is represented in burnished gold, surrounded with the twelve signs of the zodiac, with their respective characters:

♈ Aries	♎ Libra
♉ Taurus	♏ Scorpio
♊ Gemini	♐ Sagittarius
♋ Cancer	♑ Capricornus
♌ Leo	♒ Aquarius
♍ Virgo	♓ Pisces."

After giving this description, he says, "The emblematical meaning of the sun is well known to the enlightened and inquisitive Freemason; and as the real sun is situated in the center of the universe, so the emblematical sun is the center of real Masonry.

We all know," continues he, "that the sun is the fountain of light, the source of the seasons, the cause of the vicissitudes of day and night, the parent of vegetation, the friend of man; hence the scientific Freemason only knows the reason why the sun is placed in the center of this beautiful hall."

The Masons, in order to protect themselves from the persecution of the Christian Church, have always spoken in a mystical manner of the figure of the sun in their lodges, or, like the astronomer Lalande, who is a Mason, been silent upon the subject.

It is their secret, especially in Catholic countries, because the figure of the sun is the expressive criterion that denotes they are descended from the Druids, and that wise, elegant, philosophical religion was the faith opposite to the faith of the gloomy Christian Church.

The lodges of the Masons, if built for the purpose, are constructed in a manner to correspond with the apparent motion of the sun. They are situated East and West. The master's place is always in the East. In the examination of an Entered Apprentice, the master, among many other questions, asks him,

Q. "How is the lodge situated?"

A. "East and West."

Q. "Why so?"

A. "Because all churches and chapels are, or ought to be so."

This answer, which is mere catechismal form, is not an answer to the question. It does no more than remove the question a point further, which is, why ought all churches and chapels to be so? But as the Entered Apprentice is not initiated into the druidical mysteries of Masonry, he is not asked any questions a direct answer to which would lead thereto.

Q. "Where stands your master?"

A. "In the East."

Q. "Why so?"

A. "As the sun rises in the East and opens the day, so the master stands in the East (with his right hand upon his left breast, being a sign, and the square about his neck), to open the lodge, and set his men at work."

Q. "Where stand your wardens?"

A. "In the West."

Q. "What is their business?"

A. "As the sun sets in the West to close the day, so the wardens stand in the West (with their right hands upon their left breasts, being a sign, and the level and plumb rule about their necks), to close the lodge, and dismiss the men from labor, paying them their wages."

Here the name of the sun is mentioned, but it is proper to observe that in this place it has reference only to labor or to the time of labor, and not to any religious druidical rite or ceremony, as it would have with respect to the situation of lodges East and West.

I have already observed in the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion, that the situation of churches East and West is taken from the worship of the sun, which rises in the East, and has not the least reference to the person called Jesus Christ.

The Christians never bury their dead on the North side of a church; * and a Mason's lodge always has, or is supposed to have, three windows which are called fixed lights, to distinguish them from the movable lights of the sun and the moon. The master asks the Entered Apprentice,

Q. "How are they (the fixed lights) situated?"

A. "East, West and South."

Q. "What are their uses?"

A. "To light the men to and from their work."

Q. "Why are there no lights in the North?"

A. "Because the sun darts no rays from thence."

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* By the inhabitants of several countries in Northern Europe the North was believed to be the region of demons. Executed criminals were buried on the north side of churches.—*Editor.*

This, among numerous other instances, shows that the Christian religion and Masonry have one and the same common origin, the ancient worship of the sun.

The high festival of the Masons is on the day they call St. John's day; but every enlightened Mason must know that holding their festival on this day has no reference to the person called St. John, and that it is only to disguise the true cause of holding it on this day, that they call the day by that name. As there were Masons, or at least Druids, many centuries before the time of St. John, if such person ever existed, the holding their festival on this day must refer to some cause totally unconnected with John.

The case is that the day called St. John's day is the twenty-fourth day of June, and is what is called midsummer day. The sun is then arrived at the summer solstice; and, with respect to his meridinal altitude, or height at high noon, appears for some days to be of the same height.

The astronomical longest day, like the shortest day, is not every year, on account of leap year, on the same numerical day, and therefore the twenty-fourth of June is always taken for midsummer day; and it is in honor of the sun, which has then arrived at his greatest height in our hemisphere, and not anything with respect to St. John, that this annual festival of

the Masons, taken from the Druids, is celebrated on midsummer day.

Customs will often outlive the remembrance of their origin, and this is the case with respect to a custom still practised in Ireland, where the Druids flourished at the time they flourished in Britain.

On the eve of St. John's day, that is, on the eve of midsummer day, the Irish light fires on the tops of the hills. This can have no reference to St. John; but it has emblematical reference to the sun, which on that day is at his highest summer elevation, and might in common language be said to have arrived at the top of the hill.

As to what Masons, and books of Masonry, tell us of Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, it is no wise improbable that some Masonic ceremonies may have been derived from the building of that temple, for the worship of the sun was in practise many centuries before the temple existed, or before the Israelites came out of Egypt. And we learn from the history of the Jewish kings, II Kings xxii, xxiii, that the worship of the sun was performed by the Jews in that temple.

It is, however, much to be doubted if it was done with the same scientific purity and religious morality with which it was performed by the Druids, who, by

all accounts that historically remain of them, were a wise, learned, and moral class of men. The Jews, on the contrary, were ignorant of astronomy, and of science in general, and if a religion founded upon astronomy fell into their hands, it is almost certain it would be corrupted.

We do not read in the history of the Jews, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, that they were the inventors or the improvers of any one art or science. Even in the building of this temple, the Jews did not know how to square and frame the timber for beginning and carrying on the work, and Solomon was obliged to send to Hiram, King of Tyre (Zidon), to procure workmen; "for thou knowest" (says Solomon to Hiram, I Kings v, 6), "that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Zidonians."

This temple was more properly Hiram's Temple than Solomon's, and if the Masons derive anything from the building of it, they owe it to the Zidonians and not to the Jews. But to return to the worship of the sun in this temple.

It is said, II Kings xxiii, 5, "And [King Josiah] put down all the idolatrous priests . . . that burned incense unto . . . the sun, the moon, the planets, and all the host of heaven." And it is said at the

eleventh verse: "And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord . . . and burned the chariots of the sun with fire"; verse 13, "And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the King of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians" (the very people that built the temple) "did the king defile."

Besides these things, the description that Josephus gives of the decorations of this temple, resembles on a large scale those of a Mason's lodge. He says that the distribution of the several parts of the Temple of the Jews represented all nature, particularly the parts most apparent of it, as the sun, moon, the planets, the zodiac, the earth, the elements; and that the system of the world was retraced there by numerous ingenious emblems.

These, in all probability, are, what Josiah, in his ignorance, calls the abominations of the Zidonians.*

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* Smith, in speaking of a lodge, says, when the lodge is revealed to an entering Mason, it discovers to him *a representation of the World;* in which, from the wonders of nature, we are led to contemplate her great Original, and worship Him from His mighty works; and we are thereby also moved to exercise those moral and social virtues which become mankind as the servants of the great Architect of the world.—*Author.*

Everything, however, drawn from this temple,* and applied to Masonry, still refers to the worship of the sun, however corrupted or misunderstood by the Jews, and consequently to the religion of the Druids.

Another circumstance, which shows that Masonry is derived from some ancient system, prior to and unconnected with the Christian religion, is the chronology, or method of counting time, used by the Masons in the records of their lodges. They make no use of what is called the Christian era; and they reckon their months numerically, as the ancient Egyptians did, and as the Quakers do now.

I have by me a record of a French lodge, at the time the late Duke of Orleans, then Duke de Chartres, was Grand Master of Masonry in France. It begins as follows: "*Le trentième jour du sixième mois de l'an de la V. L. cinq mille sept cent soixante treize*"; that

* It may not be improper here to observe, that the law called the Law of Moses could not have been in existence at the time of building this Temple. Here is the likeness of things in heaven above and in earth beneath. And we read in I Kings, vi, vii, that Solomon made cherubs and cherubim, that he *carved* all the walls of the house round about with cherubim, and palm-trees, and open flowers, and that he made a molten sea, placed on twelve oxen, and the ledges of it were ornamented with lions, oxen, and cherubim: all this is contrary to the law called the Law of Moses.—*Author.*

is, the thirteenth day of the sixth month of the year of the Venerable Lodge, 5773.

By what I observe in English books of Masonry, the English Masons use the initials A. L. and not V. L. By A. L. they mean in the *year of Light*, as the Christians by A. D. mean in the year of our Lord. But A. L. like V. L. refers to the same chronological era, that is, to the supposed time of the Creation.

In the chapter on the origin of the Christian religion I have shown that the cosmogony, that is, the account of the Creation with which the book of Genesis opens, has been taken and mutilated from the Zend-Avesta of Zoroaster, and was fixed as a preface to the Bible after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, and that the rabbins of the Jews do not hold their account in Genesis to be a fact, but mere allegory. The six thousand years in the Zend-Avesta, is changed or interpolated into six days in the account of Genesis.

The Masons appear to have chosen the same period, and perhaps to avoid the suspicion and persecution of the Church, have adopted the era of the world as the era of Masonry. The V. L. of the French, and A. L. of the English Mason, answer to the A. M. *Anno Mundi*, or year of the world.

Though the Masons have taken many of their ceremonies and hieroglyphics from the ancient Egyptians, it is certain they have not taken their chronology from thence. If they had, the Church would soon have sent them to the stake; as the chronology of the Egyptians, like that of the Chinese, goes many thousand years beyond the Bible chronology.

The religion of the Druids, as before said, was the same as the religion of the ancient Egyptians. The priests of Egypt were the professors and teachers of science, and were styled priests of Heliopolis, that is, of the *City of the Sun.*

The Druids in Europe, who were the same order of men, have their name from the Teutonic or ancient German language; the Germans being anciently called Teutones. The word Druid signifies a *wise man.* In Persia they were called magi, which signifies the same thing.

"Egypt," says Smith, "from whence we derive many of our mysteries, has always borne a distinguished rank in history, and was once celebrated above all others for its antiquities, learning, opulence and fertility. In their system, their principal hero-gods, Osiris and Isis, theologically represented the Supreme Being and universal nature; and physically

the two great celestial luminaries, the sun and the moon, by whose influence all nature was actuated.

"The experienced brethren of the Society," says Smith in a note to this passage, "are well informed what affinity these symbols bear to Masonry, and why they are used in all Masonic lodges."

In speaking of the apparel of the Masons in their lodges, part of which, as we see in their public processions, is a white leather apron, he says, "the Druids were appareled in white at the time of their sacrifices and solemn offices. The Egyptian priests of Osiris wore snow-white cotton. The Grecian and most other priests wore white garments. As Masons, we regard the principles of those *who were the first worshipers of the true God,* imitate their apparel, and assume the badge of innocence."

"The Egyptians," continues Smith, "in the earliest ages constituted a great number of lodges, but with assiduous care kept their secrets of Masonry from all strangers. These secrets have been imperfectly handed down to us by oral tradition only, and ought to be kept undiscovered to the laborers, craftsmen, and apprentices, till by good behavior and long study they become better acquainted in geometry and the liberal arts, and thereby qualified for masters and

wardens, which is seldom or never the case with English Masons."

Under the head of Freemasonry, written by the astronomer Lalande, in the French Encyclopedia, I expected from his great knowledge in astronomy to have found much information on the origin of Masonry; for what connection can there be between any institution and the sun and twelve signs of the zodiac, if there be not something in that institution, or in its origin, that has reference to astronomy?

Everything used as a hieroglyphic has reference to the subject and purpose for which it is used, and we are not to suppose the Freemasons, among whom are many very learned and scientific men, to be such idiots as to make use of astronomical signs without some astronomical purpose.

But I was much disappointed in my expectation from Lalande. In speaking of the origin of Masonry, he says, "*L' origine de la maçoniere se perd, comme tant d' autres' dans l' obscurité des temps*"; that is, the origin of Masonry, like many others, loses itself in the obscurity of time. When I came to this expression, I supposed Lalande a Mason, and on inquiry found he was. This *passing over* saved him from the embarrassment which Masons are under respecting

the disclosure of their origin, and which they are sworn to conceal.

There is a society of Masons in Dublin who take the name of Druids; these Masons must be supposed to have a reason for taking that name.

I come now to speak of the cause of secrecy used by the Masons.

The natural source of secrecy is fear. When any new religion over-runs a former religion, the professors of the new become the persecutors of the old. We see this in all instances that history brings before us.

When Hilkiah the priest and Shaphan the scribe, in the reign of King Josiah, found, or pretended to find, the law, called the Law of Moses, a thousand years after the time of Moses (and it does not appear from II Kings, xxii, xxiii, that such a law was ever practised or known before the time of Josiah), he established that law as a national religion, and put all the priests of the sun to death.

When the Christian religion over-ran the Jewish religion, the Jews were the continual subject of persecution in all Christian countries. When the Protestant religion in England over-ran the Roman Catholic religion, it was made death for a Catholic priest to be found in England.

As this has been the case in all the instances we have any knowledge of, we are obliged to admit it with respect to the case in question, and that when the Christian religion over-ran the religion of the Druids in Italy, ancient Gaul, Britain and Ireland, the Druids became the subject of persecution.

This would naturally and necessarily oblige such of them as remained attached to their original religion to meet in secret, and under the strongest injunctions of secrecy. Their safety depended upon it. A false brother might expose the lives of many of them to destruction; and from the remains of the religion of the Druids, thus preserved, arose the institution which, to avoid the name of Druid, took that of Mason, and practised under this new name the rites and ceremonies of Druids.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

An Essay on Dream

IN this introductory chapter to his essay on Dream, Paine, it seems, utilized a part of an earlier essay. It had been previously published in Paris after Paine's departure for America, in 1802. With some omissions the pamphlet was published in London in 1811, as Part III. of "The Age of Reason," by Daniel Isaac Eaton. For publishing it he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, and to stand in the pillory for one hour in each month. This punishment drew from the poet Shelley his celebrated letter to Baron Ellenborough, Lord Chief Justice of England, who had given a scandalously prejudiced charge to the jury. Ellenborough's fame as a jurist and legislator rests for the most part on the act that bore his name by which ten new capital felonies were created. It has since been repealed.

AS a great deal is said in the New Testament about dreams, it is first necessary to explain the nature of Dream, and to show by what operation of the mind a dream is produced during sleep.

When this is understood we shall be the better enabled to judge whether any reliance can be placed upon them; and consequently, whether the several matters in the New Testament related of dreams deserve the credit which the writers of that book and priests and commentators ascribe to them.

In order to understand the nature of Dream, or of that which passes in ideal vision during a state of

sleep, it is first necessary to understand the composition and decomposition of the human mind.

The three great faculties of the mind are IMAGINATION, JUDGMENT and MEMORY. Every action of the mind comes under one or the other of these faculties. In a state of wakefulness, as in the day-time, these three faculties are all active; but that is seldom the case in sleep, and never perfectly: and this is the cause that our dreams are not so regular and rational as our waking thoughts.

The seat of that collection of powers or faculties that constitute what is called the mind is in the brain. There is not, and cannot be, any visible demonstration of this anatomically, but accidents happening to living persons show it to be so. An injury done to the brain by a fracture of the skull will sometimes change a wise man into a childish idiot—a being without a mind. But so careful has nature been of that *sanctum sanctorum* of man, the brain, that of all the external accidents to which humanity is subject, this occurs the most seldom. But we often see it happening by long and habitual intemperance.

Whether those three faculties occupy distinct apartments of the brain, is known only to that ALMIGHTY POWER that formed and organized it. We can see the external effects of muscular motion in all the members

of the body, though its *primum mobile,* or first moveing cause, is unknown to man.

Our external motions are sometimes the effect of intention, sometimes not. If we are sitting and intend to rise, or standing and intend to sit or to walk, the limbs obey that intention as if they heard the order given. But we make a thousand motions every day, and that as well waking as sleeping, that have no prior intention to direct them. Each member acts as if it had a will or mind of its own.

Man governs the whole when he pleases to govern, but in the interim the several parts, like little suburbs, govern themselves without consulting the sovereign.

And all these motions, whatever be the generating cause, are external and visible. But with respect to the brain, no ocular observation can be made upon it. All is mystery; all is darkness in that womb of thought.

Whether the brain is a mass of matter in continual rest; whether it has a vibrating, pulsative motion, or a heaving and falling motion like matter in fermentation; whether different parts of the brain have different motions according to the faculty that is employed, be it the imagination, the judgment, or the memory, man knows nothing of. He knows not the cause of his own wit. His own brain conceals it from him.

Comparing invisible by visible things, as metaphysical can sometimes be compared to physical things, the operations of these distinct and several faculties have some resemblance to a watch. The main spring which puts all in motion corresponds to the imagination; the pendulum which corrects and regulates that motion corresponds to the judgment; and the hand and dial, like the memory, record the operation.

Now in proportion as these several faculties sleep, slumber, or keep awake, during the continuance of a dream, in that proportion the dream will be reasonable or frantic, remembered or forgotten.

If there is any faculty in mental man that never sleeps it is that volatile thing the imagination. The case is different with the judgment and memory. The sedate and sober constitution of the judgment easily disposes it to rest; and as to the memory, it records in silence and is active only when it is called upon.

That the judgment soon goes to sleep may be perceived by our sometimes beginning to dream before we are fully asleep ourselves. Some random thought runs in the mind and we start, as it were, into recollection that we are dreaming between sleeping and waking.

If a pendulum of a watch by any accident becomes so displaced that it can no longer control and regulate the elastic force of the spring, the works are instantly thrown into confusion, and continue so as long as the spring continues to have force.

In like manner if the judgment sleeps while the imagination keeps awake, the dream will be a riotous assemblage of misshapen images and ranting ideas, and the more active the imagination is the wilder the dream will be. The most inconsistent and the most impossible things will appear right; because that faculty whose province it is to keep order is in a state of absence. The master of the school is gone out and the boys are in an uproar.

If the memory sleeps, we shall have no other knowledge of the dream than that we have dreamt, without knowing what it was about. In this case it is sensation rather than recollection that acts. The dream has given us some sense of pain or trouble, and we feel it as a hurt, rather than remember it as vision.

If the memory slumbers we shall have a faint remembrance of the dream, and after a few minutes it will sometimes happen that the principal passages of the dream will occur to us more fully. The cause of this is that the memory will sometimes continue slumbering or sleeping after we are awake ourselves, and

so fully that it may and sometimes does happen that we do not immediately recollect where we are, nor what we have been about, or have to do. But when the memory starts into wakefulness it brings the knowledge of these things back upon us like a flood of light, and sometimes the dream with it.

But the most curious circumstance of the mind in a state of dream is the power it has to become the agent of every person, character and thing of which it dreams. It carries on conversation with several, asks questions, hears answers, gives and receives information, and it acts all these parts itself.

Yet however various and eccentric the imagination may be in the creating of images and ideas, it cannot supply the place of memory with respect to things that are forgotten when we are awake. For example, if we have forgotten the name of a person, and dream of seeing him and asking him his name, he cannot tell it; for it is ourselves asking ourselves the question.

But though the imagination cannot supply the place of real memory, it has the wild faculty of counterfeiting memory. It dreams of persons it never knew, and talks to them as if it remembered them as old acquaintance. It relates circumstances that never happened, and tells them as if they had happened. It goes to places that never existed, and knows where all

the streets and houses are, as if we had been there before. The scenes it creates are often as scenes remembered. It will sometimes act a dream within a dream, and, in the delusion of dreaming, tell a dream it never dreamed, and tell it as if it was from memory.

It may also be remarked, that the imagination in a dream has no idea of time, *as time*. It counts only by circumstances; and if a succession of circumstances pass in a dream that would require a great length of time to accomplish them, it will appear to the dreamer that a length of time equal thereto has passed also.

As this is the state of the mind in a dream, it may rationally be said that every person is mad once in twenty-four hours, for were he to act in the day as he dreams in the night, he would be confined for a lunatic. In a state of wakefulness, those three faculties being all active, and acting in unison, constitute the rational man.

In dream it is otherwise, and, therefore, that state which is called insanity appears to be no other than a dismission of those faculties, and a cessation of the judgment during wakefulness that we so often experience during sleep; and idiocy, into which some persons have fallen, is that cessation of all the faculties

of which we can be sensible when we happen to wake before our memory.

In this view of the mind, how absurd it is to place reliance upon dreams, and how much more absurd to make them a foundation for religion; yet the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, a being never heard of before, stands on the foolish story of an old man's dream. "*And behold the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not thou to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*"—Matt. i, 20.

After this we have the childish stories of three or four other dreams: about Joseph going into Egypt; about his coming back again; about this, and about that, and this story of dreams has thrown Europe into a dream for more than a thousand years.

All the efforts that nature, reason and conscience have made to awaken man from it, have been ascribed by priestcraft and superstition to the working of the devil, and had it not been for the American Revolution, which, by establishing the universal right of conscience, first opened the way to free discussion, and for the French Revolution that followed, this Religion of Dreams had continued to be preached, and

that after it had ceased to be believed. Those who preached it and did not believe it, still believe the delusion necessary. They were not bold enough to be honest, nor honest enough to be bold.

* Every new religion, like a new play, requires a new apparatus of dresses and machinery, to fit the new characters it creates. The story of Christ in the New Testament brings a new being upon the stage, which it calls the Holy Ghost; and the story of Abraham, the father of the Jews, in the Old Testament, gives existence to a new order of beings it calls angels. There was no Holy Ghost before the time of Christ, nor angels before the time of Abraham.

We hear nothing of these winged gentlemen, till more than two thousand years, according to the Bible chronology, from the time they say the heavens, the earth and all therein were made. After this, they hop about as thick as birds in a grove. The first we hear of pays his addresses to Hagar in the wilderness; then three of them visit Sarah; another wrestles a fall with Jacob; and these birds of passage having found their way to earth and back, are continually coming and going. They eat and drink, and up again to heaven.

* This and the succeeding paragraphs, excepting the last two, were omitted in the first American publication of this essay, although they were included in the earlier French publication.—*Editor.*

What they do with the food they carry away in their bellies, the Bible does not tell us. Perhaps they do as the birds do, discharge it as they fly; for neither the Scripture nor the Church hath told us there are necessary houses for them in heaven. One would think that a system loaded with such gross and vulgar absurdities as Scripture religion is could never have obtained credit; yet we have seen what priestcraft and fanaticism could do, and credulity believe.

From angels in the Old Testament we get to prophets, to witches, to seers of visions, and dreamers of dreams; and sometimes we are told, as in I Samuel ix, 15, that God whispers in the ear. At other times we are not told how the impulse was given, or whether sleeping or waking. In II Samuel xxiv, 1, it is said, "*And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah.*" And in I Chronicles xxi, 1, when the same story is again related, it is said, "*And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.*"

Whether this was done sleeping or waking, we are not told, but it seems that David, whom they call "a man after God's own heart," did not know by what spirit he was moved; and as to the men called inspired

penmen, they agree so well about the matter that in one book they say it was God, and in the other that it was the devil.

Yet this is trash that the Church imposes upon the world as the WORD OF GOD; this is the collection of lies and contradictions called the HOLY BIBLE! this is the rubbish called REVEALED RELIGION!

The idea that writers of the Old Testament had of a God was boisterous, contemptible, and vulgar. They make Him the Mars of the Jews, the fighting God of Israel, the conjuring God of their priests and prophets. They tell us as many fables of Him as the Greeks told of Hercules. They pit Him against Pharaoh, as it were to box with him, and Moses carries the challenge. They make their God to say insultingly, *"I will get me honor upon Pharaoh and upon all his host, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen."* And that He may keep His word, they make Him set a trap in the Red Sea, in the dead of the night, for Pharaoh, his host and his horses, and drown them as a rat-catcher would do so many rats. Great honor indeed! the story of Jack the giant-killer is better told!

They match Him against the Egyptian magicians to conjure with them, and after hard conjuring on both sides (for where there is no great contest there

is no great honor) they bring Him off victorious. The first three essays are a dead match: each party turns his rod into a serpent, the rivers into blood, and creates frogs: but upon the fourth, the God of the Israelites obtains the laurel, He covers them all over with lice! The Egyptian magicians cannot do the same, and this lousy triumph proclaims the victory!

They make their God to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and belch fire and smoke upon Mount Sinai, as if He was the Pluto of the lower regions. They make Him salt up Lot's wife like pickled pork; they make Him pass like Shakespeare's *Queen Mab* into the brain of their priests, prophets and prophetesses, and tickle them into dreams, and after making Him play all kinds of tricks they confound Him with Satan, and leave us at a loss to know what God they meant!

This is the descriptive God of the Old Testament; and as to the New, though the authors of it have varied the scene, they have continued the vulgarity.

Is man ever to be the dupe of priestcraft, the slave of superstition? Is he never to have just ideas of his Creator? It is better not to believe there is a God than to believe of Him falsely. When we behold the mighty universe that surrounds us, and dart our contemplation into the eternity of space, filled with in-

numerable orbs revolving in eternal harmony, how paltry must the tales of the Old and New Testaments, profanely called the Word of God, appear to thoughtful man!

The stupendous wisdom and unerring order that reign and govern throughout this wondrous whole, and call us to reflection, *put to shame the Bible!* The God of eternity and of all that is real, is not the god of passing dreams and shadows of man's imagination. The God of truth is not the god of fable; the belief of a god begotten and a god crucified, is a god blasphemed. It is making a profane use of reason.

I shall conclude this Essay on Dream with the first two verses of Ecclesiasticus xxxiv, one of the books of the Aprocrypha. *"The hopes of a man void of understanding are vain and false; and dreams lift up fools. Whoso regardeth dreams is like him that catcheth at a shadow and followeth after the wind."*

I now proceed to an examination of the passages in the Bible, called prophecies of the coming of Christ, and to show there are no prophecies of any such person; that the passages clandestinely styled prophecies are not prophecies; and that they refer to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to any distance of future time or person.

EXAMINATION OF THE PROPHECIES

Author's Preface

To the Ministers and Preachers of all Denominations of Religion

THIS last work that Paine ever published appeared in New York in 1807 with the following title: "An Examination of the Passages in the New Testament, quoted from the Old and called Prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. To which is Prefixed an Essay on Dream, showing by what operation of the mind a Dream is produced in sleep, and applying the same to the account of Dreams in the New Testament. With an Appendix containing my private thoughts of a Future State. And Remarks on the Contradictory Doctrine in the Books of Matthew and Mark. By Thomas Paine, New York: Printed for the Author."

The pamphlet comprises the unpublished Part III. of "The Age of Reason" and the answer to the Bishop of Llandaff. The only copy of the original pamphlet known to be in existence is in the Bodleian Library.

IT is the duty of every man, as far as his ability extends, to detect and expose delusion and error. But nature has not given to everyone a talent for the purpose; and among those to whom such a talent is given there is often a want of disposition or of courage to do it.

The world or, more properly speaking, that small part of it called Christendom or the Christian world, has been amused for more than a thousand years with accounts of prophecies in the Old Testament about the coming of the person called

Jesus Christ, and thousands of sermons have been preached and volumes written to make man believe it.

In the following treatise I have examined all the passages in the New Testament, quoted from the Old, and called prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and I find no such thing as a prophecy of any such person, and I deny there are any.

The passages all relate to circumstances the Jewish nation was in at the time they were written or spoken, and not to anything that was or was not to happen in the world several hundred years afterwards; and I have shown what the circumstances were to which the passages apply or refer.

I have given chapter and verse for everything I have said, and have not gone out of the books of the Old and New Testament for evidence that the passages are not prophecies of the person called Jesus Christ.

The prejudice of unfounded belief, often degenerates into the prejudice of custom, and becomes at last rank hypocrisy. When men, from custom or fashion or any worldly motive, profess or pretend to believe what they do not believe, nor can give any reason for believing, they unship the helm of their morality, and being no longer honest to their own

minds they feel no moral difficulty in being unjust to others.

It is from the influence of this vice, hypocrisy, that we see so many church-and-meeting-going professors and pretenders to religion so full of trick and deceit in their dealings, and so loose in the performance of their engagements that they are not to be trusted further than the laws of the country will bind them. Morality has no hold on their minds, no restraint on their actions.

One set of preachers make salvation to consist in believing. They tell their congregations that if they believe in Christ their sins shall be forgiven. This, in the first place, is an encouragement to sin, in a similar manner as when a prodigal young fellow is told his father will pay all his debts, he runs into debt the faster, and becomes the more extravagant. Daddy, says he, pays all, and on he goes: just so in the other case, *Christ pays all,* and on goes the sinner.

In the next place, the doctrine these men preach is not true. The New Testament rests itself for credibility and testimony on what are called prophecies in the Old Testament of the person called Jesus Christ; and if there are no such things as prophecies of any such person in the Old Testament, the New Testament is a forgery of the councils of Nice and Laodicea,

and the faith founded thereon delusion and falsehood.*

Another set of preachers tell their congregations that God predestinated and selected, from all eternity, a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned eternally. If this were true, *the day of Judgment* IS PAST: *their preaching* is in vain, and they had better work at some useful calling for their livelihood.

This doctrine, also, like the former, has a direct tendency to demoralize mankind. Can a bad man be reformed by telling him that if he is one of those who was decreed to be damned before he was born his reformation will do him no good; and if he was decreed to be saved that he will be saved whether he believes it or not? For this is the result of the doctrine. Such preaching and such preachers do injury to the moral world. They had better be at the plow.

As in my political works my motive and object have been to give man an elevated sense of his own character, and free him from the slavish and super-

* The councils of Nice and Laodicea were held about three hundred and fifty years after the time Christ is said to have lived; and the books that now compose the New Testament, were then voted for by YEAS and NAYS, as we now vote a law. A great many that were offered had a majority of nays, and were rejected. This is the way the New Testament came into being.—*Author.*

stitious absurdity of monarchy and hereditary government, so in my publications on religious subjects my endeavors have been directed to bring man to a right use of the reason that God has given him, to impress on him the great principles of divine morality, justice, mercy and a benevolent disposition to all men and to all creatures, and to inspire in him a spirit of trust, confidence and consolation in his Creator, unshackled by the fables of books pretending to be *the Word of God.*

THOMAS PAINE.

EXAMINATION OF THE PROPHECIES

PAINE'S personal friend, Colonel John Fellows, makes the interesting observation on this work that when the author arrived in America, after fifteen years' absence in Europe, and "found that liberal opinions on religion were in disrepute, through the influence of hypocrisy and superstition, he declined publishing the entire works which he had prepared; observing that 'An author might lose the credit he had acquired by writing too much.'

"He however gave the public the 'Examination' in pamphlet form. But the apathy regarding religious inquiry determined him to discontinue the publication of his theological writings. In this case, he chose a title adapted to the particular part selected." Colonel Fellows was editor of the New York "Beacon," and was a correspondent and friend of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and John Quincy Adams. He visited Paine regularly during his last illness and records that "he died serenely, philosophically and resignedly."

THE passages called prophecies of, or concerning, Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament may be classed under the two following heads.

First, those referred to in the four books of the New Testament, called the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Secondly, those which translators and commentators have, of their own imagination, erected into prophecies, and dubbed with that title at the head of the several chapters of the Old Testament. Of these it is scarcely worth while to waste time, ink, and paper upon; I shall, therefore, confine myself chiefly to those referred to in the aforesaid four books of the New Testament. If

I show that these are not prophecies of the person called Jesus Christ, nor have reference to any such person, it will be perfectly needless to combat those which translators or the Church have invented, and for which they had no other authority than their own imagination.

I begin with the book called the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

In i. 18, it is said, "*Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph before they came together,* SHE WAS FOUND WITH CHILD OF THE HOLY GHOST."

This is going a little too fast; because to make this verse agree with the next it should have said no more than that *she was found with child;* for the next verse says, "*Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privately.*" Consequently Joseph had found out no more than that she was with child, and he knew it was not by himself.

Verses 20, 21. "*And while he thought of these things,* [that is, whether he should put her away privately, or make a public example of her], *behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him* IN A DREAM [that is, Joseph *dreamed* that an angel appeared unto him] *saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take*

unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and call his name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."

Now, without entering into any discussion upon the merits or demerits of the account here given, it is proper to observe, that it *has no higher authority than that of a dream;* for it is impossible to a man to behold anything in a dream but that which he dreams of.

I ask not, therefore, whether Joseph, if there was such a man, had such a dream or not, because admitting he had, it proves nothing. So wonderful and irrational is the faculty of the mind in dream that it acts the part of all the characters its imagination creates, and what it thinks it hears from any of them is no other than what the roving rapidity of its own imagination invents. It is therefore nothing to me what Joseph dreamed of; whether of the fidelity or infidelity of his wife. I pay no regard to my own dreams, and I should be weak indeed to put faith in the dreams of another.

The verses that follow those I have quoted are the words of the writer of the book of Matthew. *"Now* [says he] *all this* [that is, all this dreaming and this pregnancy] *was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold*

a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us."

This passage is in Isaiah vii, 14, and the writer of the book of Matthew endeavors to make his readers believe that this passage is a prophecy of the person called Jesus Christ. It is no such thing, and I go to show it is not. But it is first necessary that I explain the occasion of these words being spoken by Isaiah.

The reader will then easily perceive that so far from their being a prophecy of Jesus Christ, they have not the least reference to such a person, nor to anything that could happen in the time that Christ is said to have lived, which was about seven hundred years after the time of Isaiah. The case is this:

On the death of Solomon the Jewish nation split into two monarchies: one called the kingdom of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem: the other the kingdom of Israel, the capital of which was Samaria. The kingdom of Judah followed the line of David, and the kingdom of Israel that of Saul; and these two rival monarchies frequently carried on fierce wars against each other.

At this time Ahaz was King of Judah, which was in the time of Isaiah, Pekah was King of Israel; and Pekah joined himself to Rezin, King of Syria, to make

war against Ahaz, King of Judah; and these two kings marched a confederated and powerful army against Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed at their danger, and *"their hearts were moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."* Isaiah vii, 3.

In this perilous situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the name of the Lord (the cant phrase of all the prophets), that these two kings should not succeed against him; and to assure him that this should be the case (the case was however directly contrary*) tells Ahaz to ask a sign of the Lord.

This Ahaz declined doing, giving as a reason, that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah, who pretends to be sent from God, says, verse 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, *behold a*

* II. Chron. xxviii. 1. *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord.*—ver. 5. *Wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the King of Syria, and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captive and brought them to Damascus; and he was also delivered into the hand of the King of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.*—ver. 6. *And Pekah* (King of Israel) *slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day.*—ver. 8. *And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters.* —*Author.*

virgin shall conceive and bear a son—butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good—for before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land which thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings"—meaning the King of Israel and the King of Syria who were marching against him.

Here then is the sign which was to be the birth of a child, and that child a son; and here also is the time limited for the accomplishment of the sign, namely, before the child should know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

The thing, therefore, to be a sign of success to Ahaz must be something that would take place before the event of the battle then pending between him and the two kings could be known. A thing to be a sign must precede the thing signified. The sign of rain must be before the rain.

It would have been mockery and insulting nonsense for Isaiah to have assured Ahaz as a sign that these two things should not prevail against him, that a child should be born seven hundred years after he was dead, and that before the child so born should know to refuse the evil and choose the good, he, Ahaz, should be delivered from the danger he was then immediately threatened with.

Title Page to First Edition

"Examination of the Prophecies."

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EXAMINATION

OF THE PASSAGE IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT,

QUOTED FROM THE OLD AND CALLED PROPHECIES CONCERNING

Jesus Christ.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An ESSAY on DREAM,

Shewing by what operation of the mind a Dream is produced in sleep, and applying the same to the account of Dreams in the

New Testament;

With an APPENDIX containing my

Private Thoughts of a Future State,

And REMARKS on the Contradictory Doctrine in the Books of MATTHEW and MARK.

BY THOMAS PAINE.

NEW-YORK:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

But the case is that the child of which Isaiah speaks *was his own child,* with which his wife or his mistress was then pregnant; for he says in the next chapter (Is. viii, 2), *"And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah; and I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bear a son;"* and he says, at verse 18 of the same chapter *"Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel."*

It may not be improper here to observe, that the word translated *a virgin* in Isaiah, does not signify a virgin in Hebrew, but merely a *young woman.* The tense is also falsified in the translation. Levi * gives the Hebrew text of Isaiah vii, 14, and the translation in English with it—*"Behold a young woman* IS *with child and beareth a son."* The expression, says he, is in the present tense.

This translation agrees with the other circumstances related of the birth of this child which was to be a sign to Ahaz. But as the true translation could not have been imposed upon the world as a prophecy of a child to be born seven hundred years

* David Levi, a Jewish writer, whose "Defence of the Old Testament," published in London, 1797, was a reply to "The Age of Reason."—*Editor.*

afterwards, the Christian translators have falsified the original: and instead of making Isaiah to say, behold a *young woman* IS with child and *beareth* a son, they have made him to say, "Behold a *virgin shall* conceive and *bear* a son."

It is, however, only necessary for a person to read Isaiah vii, and viii, and he will be convinced that the passage in question is no prophecy of the person called Jesus Christ. I pass on to the second passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New, as a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew ii, 1-6. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East and are come to worship him. When Herod the king heard these things he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem, in the land of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, art not the least among the princes of Judah, for out of thee shall come a Governor that*

shall rule my people Israel." This passage is in Micah v, 2.

I pass over the absurdity of seeing and following a star in the day time, as a man would a *will-with-the-whisp,* or a candle and lantern at night; and also that of seeing it in the East, when themselves came from the East; for could such a thing be seen at all to serve them for a guide, it must be in the West to them. I confine myself solely to the passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

The book of Micah, in the passage above quoted, v, 2, is speaking of some person, without mentioning his name, from whom some great achievements were expected; but the description he gives of this person, verse 5, 6, proves evidently that it is not Jesus Christ, for he says, "and *this man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise up against him [that is against the Assyrian] seven shepherds and eight principal men.

"And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod on the entrance thereof; thus shall *he* [the person spoken of at the head of the second verse] deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders."

This is so evidently descriptive of a military chief that it cannot be applied to Christ without outraging the character they pretend to give us of him. Besides which, the circumstances of the times here spoken of and those of the times in which Christ is said to have lived are in contradiction to each other.

It was the Romans, and not the Assyrians that had conquered and *were in the land* of Judea, and *trod in their palaces* when Christ was born, and when he died, and so far from his driving them out, it was they who signed the warrant for his execution, and he suffered under it.

Having thus shown that this is no prophecy of Jesus Christ, I pass on to the third passage quoted from the Old Testament by the New, as a prophecy of him. This, like the first I have spoken of, is introduced by a dream. Joseph dreams another dream, and dreams that he sees another angel.

The account begins at Matthew ii, 13. "The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: For Herod will seek the life of the young child to destroy him.

"When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt: and was

there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, *Out of Egypt have I called my son.*"

This passage is in the book of Hosea, xi, 1. The words are, "When Israel was a child then I loved him and *called my son out of Egypt.* As they called them so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim and burned incense to graven images."

This passage, falsely called a prophecy of Christ, refers to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time of Pharaoh, and to the idolatry they committed afterwards. To make it apply to Jesus Christ, he then must be the person *who sacrificed unto Baalim and burned incense to graven images;* for the person called out of Egypt by the collective name, Israel, and the persons committing this idolatry, are the same persons or the descendants of them.

This then can be no prophecy of Jesus Christ, unless they are willing to make an idolator of him. I pass on the fourth passage called a prophecy by the writer of the book of Matthew.

This is introduced by a story told by nobody but himself, and scarcely believed by anybody, of the slaughter of all the children under two years old, by the command of Herod. A thing which it is not probable should be done by Herod, as he only held an

office under the Roman Government, to which appeals could always be had, as we see in the case of Paul. Matthew, however, having made or told his story, says, ii, 17, 18, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying—*In Ramah was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not.*"

This passage is in Jeremiah xxxi, 15; and this verse, when separated from the verses before and after it, and which explain its application, might with equal propriety be applied to every case of wars, sieges and other violences, such as the Christians themselves have often done to the Jews, where mothers have lamented the loss of their children.

There is nothing in the verse, taken singly, that designates or points out any particular application of it otherwise than it points to some circumstances which, at the time of writing it, had already happened, and not to a thing yet to happen, for the verse is in the preter or past tense. I go to explain the case and show the application of the verse.

Jeremiah lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged, took, plundered and destroyed Jerusalem, and led the Jews captive to Babylon. He carried his

violence against the Jews to every extreme. He slew the sons of King Zedekiah before his face, he then put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and kept him in prison till the day of his death.

It is of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that Jeremiah is speaking. Their Temple was destroyed, their land desolated, their nation and government entirely broken up, and themselves, men, women and children, carried into captivity. They had too many sorrows of their own, immediately before their eyes, to permit them, or any of their chiefs, to be employing themselves on things that might, or might not, happen in the world seven hundred years afterwards.

It is, as already observed, of this time of sorrow and suffering to the Jews that Jeremiah is speaking in the verse in question. In the next two verses (16, 17), he endeavors to console the sufferers by giving them hopes, and, according to the fashion of speaking in those days, assurances from the Lord (that their sufferings should have an end, and that *their children should return again to their own children.* But I leave the verses to speak for themselves, and the Old Testament to testify against the New.

Jeremiah xxxi, 15. "Thus saith the Lord, a voice *was* heard in Ramah [it is in the preter tense], lamen-

tation and bitter weeping: Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children because they were not." Verse 16, "Thus saith the Lord: Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; *and* THEY *shall come again from the land of the enemy.*" Verse 17.—"And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that *thy children shall come again to their own border.*"

By what strange ignorance or imposition is it, that the children of which Jeremiah speaks (meaning the people of the Jewish nation, scripturally called *children of Israel,* and not mere infants under two years old), and who were to return again from the land of the enemy, and come again into their own borders, can mean the children that Matthew makes Herod to slaughter? Could those return again from the land of the enemy, or how can the land of the enemy be applied to them? Could they come again to their own borders?

Good heavens! How has the world been imposed upon by testament-makers, priestcraft and pretended prophecies. I pass on to the fifth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

This, like two of the former, is introduced by dream. Joseph dreamed another dream, and dreamed

of another angel. And Matthew is again the historian of the dream and the dreamer. If it were asked how Matthew could know what Joseph dreamed, neither the Bishop nor all the Church could answer the question.

Perhaps it was Matthew that dreamed, and not Joseph; that is, Joseph dreamed by proxy, in Matthew's brain, as they tell us Daniel dreamed for Nebuchadnezzar. But be this as it may, I go on with my subject.

The account of this dream is in Matthew ii, 19-23. "But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother and go into the land of Israel; for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel."

"But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither. Notwithstanding being warned of God in a *dream* [here is another dream] he turned aside into the parts of Galilee; and he came and dwelt in a city called *Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.*"

Here is good circumstantial evidence that Matthew dreamed, for there is no such passage in all the Old Testament; and I invite the Bishop,* and all the priests in Christendom, including those of America, to produce it. I pass on to the sixth passage, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

This, as Swift says on another occasion, is *lugged in head and shoulders;* it need only to be seen in order to be hooted as a forced and far-fetched piece of imposition.

Matthew iv, 12-16, "Now when Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee: and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zebulon and Nephthalim: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, *The land of Zebulon and the land of Nephtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is springing upon them.*"

I wonder Matthew has not made the cris-cross-row, or the Christ-cross-row (I know not how the priests spell it) into a prophecy. He might as well have

* Dr. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, who had replied to "The Age of Reason."

done this as cut out these unconnected and undescriptive sentences from the place they stand in and dubbed them with that title. The words, however, are in Isaiah ix, 1, 2, as follows: "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted *the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*"

All this relates to two circumstances that had already happened at the time these words in Isaiah were written. The one, where the land of Zebulon and Naphtali had been lightly afflicted, and afterwards more grievously by the way of the sea.

But observe, reader, how Matthew has falsified the text. He begins his quotation at a part of the verse where there is not so much as a comma, and thereby cuts off everything that relates to the first affliction. He then leaves out all that relates to the second affliction, and by this means leaves out everything that makes the verse intelligible, and reduces it to a senseless skeleton of names of towns.

To bring this imposition of Matthew clearly and immediately before the eye of the reader, I will repeat the verse, and put between brackets [ ] the words

he has left out, and put in *italics* those he has preserved.

"[Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation when at the first he lightly afflicted] *the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali* [and did afterwards more grievously afflict her] *by the way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations.*"

What gross imposition is it to gut, as the phrase is, a verse in this manner, render it perfectly senseless, and then puff it off on a credulous world as a prophecy. I proceed to the next verse.

Verse 2. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." All this is historical, and not in the least prophetical. The whole is in the preter tense: it speaks of things that *had been accomplished* at the time the words were written, and not of things to be accomplished afterwards.

As then the passage is in no possible sense prophetical, nor intended to be so, and that to attempt to make it so is not only to falsify the original but to commit a criminal imposition, it is matter of no concern to us, otherwise than as curiosity, to know who the people were of which the passage speaks that sat

in darkness, and what the light was that had shined in upon them.

If we look into the preceding chapter, Isaiah viii, of which ix is only a continuation, we shall find the writer speaking, at verse nineteen of "*witches and wizards who peep about and mutter,*" and of people who made application to them; and he preaches and exhorts them against this darksome practise.

It is of this people, and of this darksome practise, or *walking in darkness,* that he is speaking at ix, 2; and with respect to *the light that had shined in upon them,* it refers entirely to his own ministry, and to the boldness of it, which opposed itself to that of *the witches and wizards who peeped about and muttered.*

Isaiah is, upon the whole, a wild, disorderly writer, preserving in general no clear chain of perception in the arrangement of his ideas, and consequently producing no defined conclusions from them.

It is the wildness of his style, the confusion of his ideas, and the ranting metaphors he employs, that have afforded so many opportunities to priestcraft in some cases, and to superstition in others, to impose those defects upon the world as prophecies of Jesus Christ.

Finding no direct meaning in them, and not knowing what to make of them, and supposing at the same

time they were intended to have a meaning, they supplied the defect by inventing a meaning of their own, and called it *his*. I have however in this place done Isaiah the justice to rescue him from the claws of Matthew, who has torn him unmercifully to pieces, and from the imposition or ignorance of priests and commentators, by letting Isaiah speak for himself.

If the words *walking in darkness,* and *light breaking in,* could in any case be applied prophetically, which they cannot be, they would better apply to the times we now live in than to any other. The world has "*walked in darkness*" for eighteen hundred years, both as to religion and government, and it is only since the American Revolution began that light has broken in.

The belief of *one God,* whose attributes are revealed to us in the book or scripture of the creation, which no human hand can counterfeit or falsify, and not in the written or printed book which, as Matthew has shown, can be altered or falsified by ignorance or design, is now making its way among us: and as to government, *the light is already gone forth,* and while men ought to be careful not to be blinded by the excess of it, as at a certain time in France when everything was Robespierrean violence, they ought to

reverence, and even to adore it, with all the perseverance that true wisdom can inspire.

I pass on to the seventh passage, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew viii, 16, 17. "When the evening was come, they brought unto him [Jesus] many that were possessed with devils, and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, *himself took our infirmities, and bare our sickness.*"

This affair of people being possessed by devils, and of casting them out, was the fable of the day when the books of the New Testament were written. It had not existence at any other time. The books of the Old Testament mention no such thing; the people of the present day know of no such thing; nor does the history of any people or country speak of such a thing. It starts upon us all at once in the book of Matthew, and is altogether an invention of the New Testament-makers and the Christian Church.

The book of Matthew is the first book where the word *devil* is mentioned.* We read in some of the books of the Old Testament of things called familiar spirits, the supposed companions of people called

* The word *devil* is a personification of the word *evil.—Author.*

witches and wizards. It was no other than the trick of pretended conjurers to obtain money from credulous and ignorant people, or the fabricated charge of superstitious malignancy against unfortunate and decrepit old age. But the idea of a familiar spirit, if we can affix any idea to the term, is exceedingly different to that of being possessed by a devil.

In the one case, the supposed familiar spirit is a dexterous agent, that comes and goes and does as he is bidden; in the other, he is a turbulent roaring monster that tears and tortures the body into convulsions. Reader, whoever thou art, put thy trust in thy Creator, make use of the reason He endowed thee with, and cast from thee all such fables.

The passage alluded to by Matthew, for as a quotation it is false, is in Isaiah, liii, 4, which is as follows: "Surely *he* [the person of whom Isaiah is speaking] *hath borne* our griefs and carried our sorrows." It is in the preter tense.

Here is nothing about casting out devils, nor curing of sicknesses. The passage, therefore, so far from being a prophecy of Christ, is not even applicable as a circumstance.

Isaiah, or at least the writer of the book that bears his name, employs the whole of this chapter, liii, in lamenting the sufferings of some deceased persons, of

whom he speaks very pathetically. It is a monody on the death of a friend; but he mentions not the name of the person, nor gives any circumstance of him by which he can be personally known; and it is this silence, which is evidence of nothing, that Matthew has laid hold of, to put the name of Christ to it; as if the chiefs of the Jews, whose sorrows were then great, and the times they lived in big with danger, were never thinking about their own affairs, nor the fate of their own friends, but were continually running a wild-goose chase into futurity.

To make a monody into a prophecy is an absurdity. The characters and circumstances of men, even in the different ages of the world, are so much alike, that what is said of one may with propriety be said of many; but this fitness does not make the passage into a prophecy; and none but an impostor, or a bigot, would call it so.

Isaiah, in deploring the hard fate and loss of his friend, mentions nothing of him but what the human lot of man is subject to. All the cases he states of him, his persecutions, his imprisonment, his patience in suffering, and his perseverance in principle, are all within the line of nature; they belong exclusively to none, and may with justness be said of many.

But if Jesus Christ was the person the Church represents him to be, that which would exclusively apply to him must be something that could not apply to any other person; something beyond the line of nature, something beyond the lot of mortal man; and there are no such expressions in this chapter, nor any other chapter in the Old Testament.

It is no exclusive description to say of a person, as is said of the person Isaiah is lamenting in this chapter, *He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.* This may be said of thousands of persons, who have suffered oppressions and unjust death with patience, silence, and perfect resignation.

Grotius, whom the Bishop [of Llandaff] esteems a most learned man, and who certainly was so, supposes that the person of whom Isaiah is speaking, is Jeremiah. Grotius is led into this opinion from the agreement there is between the description given by Isaiah and the case of Jeremiah, as stated in the book that bears his name.

If Jeremiah was an innocent man, and not a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was besieged, his case was hard; he was accused by

his countrymen, was persecuted, oppressed, and imprisoned, and he says of himself, (see Jer. xi. 19) *"But as for me I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter."*

I should be inclined to the same opinion with Grotius, had Isaiah lived at the time when Jeremiah underwent the cruelties of which he speaks; but Isaiah died about fifty years before; and it is of a person of his own time whose case Isaiah is lamenting in the chapter in question, and which imposition and bigotry, more than seven hundred years afterwards, perverted into a prophecy of a person they call Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the eighth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew xii, 14-21: "Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. But when Jesus knew it he withdrew himself; and great numbers followed him and he healed them all; and he charged them they should not make him known; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles.

"He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he

not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

In the first place, this passage hath not the least relation to the purpose for which it is quoted.

Matthew says that the Pharisees held a council against Jesus to destroy him—that Jesus withdrew himself—that great numbers followed him—that he healed them—and that he charged them they should not make him known. But the passage Matthew has quoted as being fulfilled by these circumstances does not so much as apply to any one of them.

It has nothing to do with the Pharisees holding a council to destroy Jesus—with his withdrawing himself—with great numbers following him—with his healing them—nor with his charging them not to make him known.

The purpose for which the passage is quoted, and the passage itself, are as remote from each other, as nothing from something. But the case is that people have been so long in the habit of reading the books called the Bible and Testament with their eyes shut, and their senses locked up, that the most stupid inconsistencies have passed on them for truth, and imposition for prophecy. The Allwise Creator has

been dishonored by being made the Author of fable, and the human mind degraded by believing it.

In this passage, as in that last mentioned, the name of the person of whom the passage speaks is not given, and we are left in the dark respecting him. It is this defect in the history that bigotry and imposition have laid hold of, to call it prophecy.

Had Isaiah lived in the time of Cyrus, the passage would descriptively apply to him. As King of Persia, his authority was great among the Gentiles, and it is of such a character the passage speaks; and his friendship for the Jews, whom he liberated from captivity, and who might then be compared to a *bruised reed*, was extensive.

But this description does not apply to Jesus Christ, who had no authority among the Gentiles; and as to his own countrymen, figuratively described by the bruised reed, it was they who crucified him. Neither can it be said of him that he did not cry, and that his voice was not heard in the street. As a preacher it was his business to be heard, and we are told that he traveled about the country for that purpose.

Matthew has given a long sermon, which (if his authority is good, but which is much to be doubted since he imposes so much) Jesus preached to a multitude upon a mountain, and it would be a quibble to

say that a mountain is not a street, since it is a place equally as public.

The last verse in the passage (the fourth) as it stands in Isaiah, and which Matthew has not quoted, says, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." This also applies to Cyrus. He was not discouraged, he did not fail, he conquered all Babylon, liberated the Jews, and established laws.

But this cannot be said of Jesus Christ, who in the passage before us, according to Matthew, [xii, 15], withdrew himself for fear of the Pharisees, and charged the people that followed him not to make it known where he was; and who, according to other parts of the Testament, was continually moving from place to place to avoid being apprehended.*

* In the second part of the "Age of Reason," I have shown that the book ascribed to Isaiah is not only miscellaneous as to matter, but as to authorship; that there are parts in it which could not be written by Isaiah, because they speak of things one hundred and fifty years after he was dead. The instance I have given of this, in that work, corresponds with the subject I am upon, *at least a little better than Matthew's introduction and his question.*

Isaiah lived, the latter part of his life, in the time of Hezekiah, and it was about one hundred and fifty years from the death of Hezekiah to the first year of the reign of Cyrus, when Cyrus published a proclamation, which is given in Ezra i, for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. It cannot be doubted, at least it ought not to be doubted, that the Jews would feel an affectionate gratitude for this act of benevolent justice, and it is natural they would

But it is immaterial to us, at this distance of time, to know who the person was: it is sufficient to the purpose I am upon, that of detecting fraud and falsehood, to know who it was not, and to show it was not the person called Jesus Christ.

I pass on to the ninth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew xxi. 1-5. "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethpage, unto the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them and bring them unto me. And if any man say ought to you, ye shall say, the Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send

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express that gratitude in the customary style, bombastical and hyperbolical as it was, which they used on extraordinary occasions, and which was and still is in practice with all the eastern nations.

The instance to which I refer, and which is given in the second part of the "Age of Reason," Is. xliv, 28 and xlv, 1, in these words: *"That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut."*

This complimentary address is in the present tense, which shows that the things of which it speaks were in existence at the

them. All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, *Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*"

Poor ass! let it be some consolation amidst all thy sufferings, that if the heathen world erected a bear into a constellation the Christian world has elevated thee into a prophecy.

This passage is in Zechariah ix, 9, and is one of the whims of friend Zechariah to congratulate his countrymen, who were then returning from captivity in Babylon, and himself with them, to Jerusalem. It has no concern with any other subject. It is strange that apostles, priests and commentators never permit,

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time of writing it; and consequently that the author must have been at least one hundred and fifty years later than Isaiah, and that the book which bears his name is a compilation. The Proverbs called Solomon's, and the Psalms called David's, are of the same kind. The last two verses of the second book of Chronicles, and the first three verses of Ezra i are word for word the same; which show that the compilers of the Bible mixed the writings of different authors together, and put them under some common head.

As we have here an instance in Isaiah xliv and xlv of the introduction of the name of Cyrus into a book to which it cannot belong, it affords good ground to conclude, that the passage in chapter xlii, in which the character of Cyrus is given without his name, has been introduced in like manner, and that the person there spoken of is Cyrus.—*Author.*

or never suppose, the Jews to be speaking of their own affairs.

Everything in the Jewish books is perverted and distorted into meanings never intended by the writers. Even the poor ass must not be a Jew-ass but a Christian-ass. I wonder they did not make an apostle of him, or a bishop, or at least make him speak and prophesy. He could have lifted up his voice as loud as any of them.

Zechariah, in the first chapter of his book, indulges himself in several whims on the joy of getting back to Jerusalem. He says at the eighth verse, "I saw by night [Zechariah was a sharp-sighted seer] and behold a man setting on a *red horse* [yes, reader, a *red horse*], and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom, and behind him were *red horses, speckled and white.*" He says nothing about green horses, nor blue horses, perhaps because it is difficult to distinguish green from blue by night, but a Christian can have no doubt they were there, because "*faith is the evidence of things not seen.*"

Zechariah then introduces an angel among his horses, but he does not tell us what color the angel was of, whether black or white, nor whether he came to buy horses, or only to look at them as curiosities, for certainly they were of that kind. Be this however

as it may, he enters into conversation with this angel on the joyful affair of getting back to Jerusalem, and he saith at the sixteenth verse, "*Therefore, thus saith the Lord,* I AM RETURNED *to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.*" An expression signifying the rebuilding the city.

All this, whimsical and imaginary as it is, sufficiently proves that it was the entry of the Jews into Jerusalem from captivity, and not the entry of Jesus Christ seven hundred years afterwards, that is the subject upon which Zechariah is always speaking.

As to the expression of riding upon an ass, which commentators represent as a sign of humility in Jesus Christ, the case is, he never was so well mounted before. The asses of those countries are large and well proportioned, and were anciently the chief of riding animals. Their beasts of burden, and which served also for the conveyance of the poor, were camels and dromedaries. We read in Judges x, 4, that Jair [one of the Judges of Israel] "had thirty sons that *rode on thirty ass-colts,* and they had thirty cities." But commentators distort everything.

There is besides very reasonable grounds to conclude that this story of Jesus riding publicly into Jerusalem, accompanied, as it is said at verses eight

and nine, by a great multitude, shouting and rejoicing and spreading their garments by the way, is a story altogether destitute of truth.

In the last passage called a prophecy that I examined, Jesus is represented as withdrawing, that is, running away, and concealing himself for fear of being apprehended, and charging the people that were with him not to make him known. No new circumstance had arisen in the interim to change his condition for the better; yet here he is represented as making his public entry into the same city from which he had fled for safety. The two cases contradict each other so much that if both are not false, one of them at least can scarcely be true.

For my own part, I do not believe there is one word of historical truth in the whole book. I look upon it at best to be a romance; the principal personage of which is an imaginary or allegorical character founded upon some tale, and in which the moral is in many parts good, and the narrative part very badly and blunderingly written.

I pass on to the tenth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew xxvi, 51-56: "And behold one of them which was with Jesus [meaning Peter] stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of

the high priest, and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?

"In that same hour Jesus said to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and with staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled."

This loose and general manner of speaking, admits neither of detection nor of proof. Here is no quotation given, nor the name of any Bible author mentioned, to which reference can be had.

There are, however, some high improbabilities against the truth of the account.

First—It is not probable that the Jews, who were then a conquered people, and under subjection to the Romans, should be permitted to wear swords.

Secondly—If Peter had attacked the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear, he would have been immediately taken up by the guard that took up his master and sent to prison with him.

Thirdly—What sort of disciples and preaching apostles must those of Christ have been that wore swords?

Fourthly—This scene is represented to have taken place the same evening of what is called the Lord's supper, which makes, according to the ceremony of it, the inconsistency of wearing swords the greater.

I pass on to the eleventh passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew xxvii, 3-10: "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us, see thou to that. And he cast down the thirty pieces of silver, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

"And the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, it is not lawful to put them in the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field is called the field of blood unto this day.

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued,

whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

This is a most barefaced piece of imposition. The passage in Jeremiah which speaks of the purchase of a field has no more to do with the case to which Matthew applies it than it has to do with the purchase of lands in America. I will recite the whole passage:

Jeremiah xxxii, 6-15: "And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Behold Hanameel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth, for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field I pray thee that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself.

"Then I knew this was the word of the Lord. And I bought the field of Hanameel mine uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence and sealed it, and took witnesses and weighed him the money in the balances.

"So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open; and I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed [the book of the purchase], before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

"And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land."

I forebear making any remark on this abominable imposition of Matthew. The thing glaringly speaks for itself. It is priests and commentators that I rather ought to censure for having preached falsehood so long and kept people in darkness with respect to those impositions.

I am not contending with these men upon points of doctrine, for I know that sophistry has always a city of refuge. I am speaking of facts; for wherever the thing called a fact is a falsehood, the faith founded

upon it is delusion, and the doctrine raised upon it not true. Ah, reader, put thy trust in thy Creator, and thou wilt be safe; but if thou trust to the book called the Scriptures thou trust to the rotten staff of fable and falsehood. But I return to my subject.

There is among the whims and reveries of Zechariah, mention made of thirty pieces of silver given to a potter. They can hardly have been so stupid as to mistake a potter for a field: and if they had, the passage in Zechariah has no more to do with Jesus, Judas and the field to bury strangers in than that already quoted. I will recite the passage.

Zechariah xi, 7-14: "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called *Beauty*, the other I called *Bands;* and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I, I will not feed you; that which dieth, let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat everyone the flesh of another.

"And I took my staff, even *Beauty*, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock who waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. And I

said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price *thirty pieces of silver.*

"And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the *potter;* a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even *Bands,* that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." *

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* Whiston, in his "Essay on the Old Testament," says that the passage of Zechariah of which I have spoken, was, in the copies of the Bible of the First Century, in the book of Jeremiah, from whence, says he, it was taken and inserted without coherence in that of Zechariah. Well, let it be so, it does not make the case a whit the better for the New Testament; but it makes the case a great deal the worse for the Old.

Because it shows, as I have mentioned respecting some passages in a book ascribed to Isaiah, that the works of different authors have been so mixed and confounded together, they cannot now be discriminated, except where they are historical, chronological, or biographical, as in the interpolation in Isaiah. It is the name of Cyrus, inserted where it could not be inserted, as he was not in existence till one hundred and fifty years after the time of Isaiah, that detects the interpolation and the blunder with it.

Whiston was a man of great literary learning, and what is of much higher degree, of deep scientific learning. He was one of the best and most celebrated mathematicians of his time, for which he was made professor of mathematics of the University of Cambridge. He wrote so much in defense of the Old Testament, and of what he calls prophecies of Jesus Christ, that at last he began to suspect the truth of the Scriptures, and wrote against them; for it is only those who examine them, that see the imposi-

There is no making either head or tail of this incoherent gibberish. His two staves, one called *Beauty* and the other *Bands*, is so much like a fairy tale that I doubt if it had any other origin. There is, however, no part that has the least relation to the case stated in Matthew; on the contrary, it is the reverse of it. Here the *thirty pieces* of silver, whatever it was for, is called a *goodly price*, it was as much as the thing was worth, and according to the language of the day, was approved of by the Lord, and the money given to the potter in the house of the Lord.

In the case of Jesus and Judas, as stated in Matthew, the thirty pieces of silver were the price of blood; the transaction was condemned by the Lord, and the money when refunded was refused admittance into the treasury. Everything in the two cases is the reverse of each other.

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tion. Those who believe them most, are those who know least about them.

Whiston, after writing so much in defense of the Scriptures, was at last prosecuted for writing against them. It was this that gave occasion to Swift, in his ludicrous epigram on Ditton and Whiston, each of which set up to find out the longitude, to call the one *good master Ditton* and the other *wicked Will Whiston*. But as Swift was a great associate with the Free-thinkers of those days, such as Bolingbroke, Pope, and others, who did not believe the book called the Scriptures, there is no certainty whether he wittily called him *wicked* for defending the Scriptures, or for writing against them. The known character of Swift decides for the former.—*Author.*

Besides this, a very different and direct contrary account to that of Matthew, is given of the affair of Judas, in the book called the "Acts of the Apostles"; according to that book the case is, that so far from Judas repenting and returning the money, and the high priest buying a field with it to bury strangers in, Judas kept the money and bought a field with it for himself; and instead of hanging himself as Matthew says, that he fell headlong and burst asunder. Some commentators endeavor to get over one part of the contradiction by ridiculously supposing that Judas hanged himself first and the rope broke.

Acts i, 16-18: "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus [David says not a word about Judas], for he [Judas] was numbered among us and obtained part of our ministry. *Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and his bowels gushed out.*"

Is it not a species of blasphemy to call the New Testament *revealed religion,* when we see in it such contradictions and absurdities? I pass on to the twelfth passage called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

Matthew xxvii, 35: "And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, *They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.*" This expression is in Psalm xxii, 18.

The writer of that Psalm (whoever he was, for the Psalms are a collection and not the work of one man) is speaking of himself and his own case, and not that of another. He begins this Psalm with the words which the New Testament writers ascribed to Jesus Christ: *"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me"*—words which might be uttered by a complaining man without any great impropriety, but very improperly from the mouth of a reputed God.

The picture which the writer draws of his own situation in this Psalm, is gloomy enough. He is not prophesying, but complaining of his own hard case. He represents himself as surrounded by enemies and beset by persecutions of every kind; and by the way of showing the inveteracy of his persecutors he says, *"They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."*

The expression is in the present tense; and is the same as to say, they pursue me even to the clothes upon my back, and dispute how they shall divide

them. Besides, the word *vesture* does not always mean clothing of any kind, but *Property*, or rather the admitting a man to, or *investing* him with property; and as it is used in this Psalm distinct from the word garment, it appears to be used in this sense. But Jesus had no property; for they make him say of himself, *"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."*

But be this as it may, if we permit ourselves to suppose the Almighty would condescend to tell, by what is called the spirit of prophecy, what could come to pass in some future age of the world, it is an injury to our own faculties, and to our ideas of His greatness, to imagine that it would be about an old coat, or an old pair of breeches, or about anything which the common accidents of life, or the quarrels which attend it, exhibit every day.

That which is in the power of man to do, or in his will not to do, is not a subject for prophecy, even if there were such a thing, because it cannot carry with it any evidence of divine power, or divine interposition.

The ways of God are not the ways of men. That which an Almighty power performs, or wills, is not within the circle of human power to do, or to control.

But any executioner and his assistants might quarrel about dividing the garments of a sufferer, or divide them without quarreling, and by that means fulfil the thing called a prophecy, or set it aside.

In the passages before examined, I have exposed the falsehood of them. In this I exhibit its degrading meanness, as an insult to the Creator and an injury to human reason.

Here end the passages called prophecies by Matthew.

Matthew concludes his book by saying, that when Christ expired on the cross, the rocks rent, the graves opened, and the bodies of many of the saints arose; and Mark says, there was darkness over the land from the sixth hour until the ninth.

They produce no prophecy for this; but had these things been facts, they would have been a proper subject for prophecy, because none but an Almighty power could have inspired a foreknowledge of them, and afterwards fulfilled them. Since then there is no such prophecy, but a pretended prophecy of an old coat, the proper deduction is, there were no such things, and that the book of Matthew was fable and falsehood.

I pass on to the book called the Gospel according to St. Mark.

The Book of Mark

There are but few passages in Mark called prophecies; and but few in Luke and John. Such as there are I shall examine, and also such other passages as interfere with those cited by Matthew.

Mark begins his book by a passage which he puts in the shape of a prophecy. Mark i, 1, 2.—"The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: As it is written in the prophets, *Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.*" (Malachi iii, 1.)

The passage in the original is in the first person. Mark makes this passage to be a prophecy of John the Baptist, said by the Church to be a forerunner of Jesus Christ. But if we attend to the verses that follow this expression, as it stands in Malachi, and to the first and fifth verses of the next chapter, we shall see that this application of it is erroneous and false.

Malachi having said, at the first verse, "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me," says, at the second verse, "But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."

This description can have no reference to the birth of Jesus Christ, and consequently none to John the Baptist. It is a scene of fear and terror that is here described, and the birth of Christ is always spoken of as a time of joy and glad tidings.

Malachi, continuing to speak on the same subject, explains in the next chapter what the scene is of which he speaks in the verses above quoted, and whom the person is whom he calls the messenger.

"Behold," says he (iv, 1), "the day cometh that shall burn like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day cometh that shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Verse 5: "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

By what right, or by what imposition or ignorance Mark has made Elijah into John the Baptist, and Malachi's description of the day of judgment into the birthday of Christ, I leave to the Bishop [of Llandaff] to settle.

Mark (i, 2, 3), confounds two passages together, taken from different books of the Old Testament. The second verse, "Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before

thee," is taken, as I have said before, from Malachi. The third verse, which says, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight," is not in Malachi, but in Isaiah, xl, 3.

Whiston says that both these verses were originally in Isaiah. If so, it is another instance of the disordered state of the Bible, and corroborates what I have said with respect to the name and description of Cyrus being in the book of Isaiah, to which it cannot chronologically belong.

The words in Isaiah—"*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*"—are in the present tense, and consequently not predictive. It is one of those rhetorical figures which the Old Testament authors frequently used. That it is merely rhetorical and metaphorical, may be seen at the sixth verse: "And the voice said, cry; and he said what shall I cry? *All flesh is grass.*"

This is evidently nothing but a figure; for flesh is not grass otherwise than as a figure or metaphor, where one thing is put for another. Besides which, the whole passage is too general and too declamatory to be applied exclusively to any particular person or purpose.

I pass on to the eleventh chapter.

In this chapter, Mark speaks of Christ riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he does not make it the accomplishment of a prophecy, as Matthew has done, for he says nothing about a prophecy. Instead of which he goes on the other tack, and in order to add new honors to the ass, he makes it to be a miracle; for he says, verse 2, it was a colt "*whereon never man sat*"; signifying thereby, that as the ass had not been broken, he consequently was *inspired into good manners*, for we do not hear that he kicked Jesus Christ off. There is not a word about his kicking in all the four Evangelists.

I pass on from these feats of *horsemanship* performed upon a jack-ass, to the 15th chapter. At the 24th verse of this chapter, Mark speaks of *parting Christ's garments and casting lots upon them*, but he applies no prophecy to it as Matthew does. He rather speaks of it as a thing then in practise with executioners, as it is at this day.

At the 28th verse of the same chapter, Mark speaks of Christ being crucified between two thieves; that, says he, the Scripture might be fulfilled, "*which saith, and he was numbered with the transgressors.*" The same might be said of the thieves.

This expression is in Isaiah liii, 12. Grotius applies it to Jeremiah. But the case has happened so often in the world, where innocent men have been numbered with transgressors, and is still continually happening, that it is absurdity to call it a prophecy of any particular person. All those whom the church calls martyrs were numbered with transgressors.

All the honest patriots who fell upon the scaffold in France, in the time of Robespierre, were numbered with transgressors; and if himself had not fallen, the same case according to a note in his own handwriting, had befallen me; yet I suppose the Bishop [of Llandaff] will not allow that Isaiah was prophesying of Thomas Paine.

These are all the passages in Mark which have any reference to prophecies.

Mark concludes his book by making Jesus to say to his disciples (xvi, 16-18), "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned [fine popish stuff this], and these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt

them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Now, the Bishop, in order to know if he has all this saving and wonder-working faith, should try those things upon himself. He should take a good dose of arsenic, and if he please, I will send him a rattlesnake from America.

As for myself, as I believe in God and not at all in Jesus Christ, nor in the books called the Scriptures, the experiment does not concern me.

I pass on to the book of Luke.

The Book of Luke

There are no passages in Luke called prophecies, excepting those which relate to the passages I have already examined.

Luke speaks of Mary being espoused to Joseph, but he makes no references to the passage in Isaiah, as Matthew does. He speaks also of Jesus riding into Jerusalem upon a colt, but he says nothing about a prophecy. He speaks of John the Baptist and refers to the passage in Isaiah, of which I have already spoken.

At chapter xiii, 31, 32, he says, "*The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him*

[*Jesus*], *Get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee. And he said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.*"

Matthew makes Herod to die while Christ was a child in Egypt, and makes Joseph to return with the child on the news of Herod's death, who had sought to kill him. Luke makes Herod to be living, and to seek the life of Jesus after Jesus was thirty years of age: for he says (iii, 23), "And Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph."

The obscurity in which the historical part of the New Testament is involved, with respect to Herod, may afford to priests and commentators a plea, which to some may appear plausible, but to none satisfactory, that the Herod of which Matthew speaks, and the Herod of which Luke speaks, were different persons.

Matthew calls Herod a king; and Luke (iii, 1) calls Herod, Tetrarch (that is, Governor) of Galilee. But there could be no such person as *a King Herod*, because the Jews and their country were then under the dominion of the Roman Emperors who governed then by tetrarchs, or governors.

Luke ii makes Jesus to be born when Cyrenius was Governor of Syria, to which government Judea was annexed; and according to this, Jesus was not born in the time of Herod. Luke says nothing about Herod seeking the life of Jesus when he was born; nor of his destroying the children under two years old; nor of Joseph fleeing with Jesus into Egypt; nor of his returning from thence. On the contrary, the book of Luke speaks as if the person it calls Christ had never been out of Judea, and that Herod sought his life after he commenced preaching, as is before stated.

I have already shown that Luke, in the book called the Acts of the Apostles (which commentators ascribe to Luke), contradicts the account in Matthew with respect to Judas and the thirty pieces of silver. Matthew says that Judas returned the money, and that the high priests bought with it a field to bury strangers in; Luke says that Judas kept the money, and bought a field with it for himself.

As it is impossible the wisdom of God should err, so it is impossible those books should have been written by divine inspiration. Our belief in God and His unerring wisdom forbids us to believe it. As for myself, I feel religiously happy in the total disbelief of it.

There are no other passages called prophecies in Luke than those I have spoken of. I pass on to the book of John.

The Book of John

John, like Mark and Luke, is not much of a prophecy-monger. He speaks of the ass, and the casting lots for Jesus's clothes, and some other trifles, of which I have already spoken.

John makes Jesus to say (v, 46), "*For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*" The book of the Acts, in speaking of Jesus, says (iii, 22), "*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord, your God, raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.*"

This passage is in Deuteronomy, xviii, 15. They apply it as a prophecy of Jesus. What imposition! The person spoken of in Deuteronomy, and also in Numbers, where the same person is spoken of, is *Joshua,* the minister of Moses, and his immediate successor, and just such another Robespierrean character as Moses is represented to have been. The case, as related in those books, is as follows:

Moses was grown old and near to his end, and in order to prevent confusion after his death, for the

Israelites had no settled system of government, it was thought best to nominate a successor to Moses while he was yet living. This was done, as we are told, in the following manner:

Numbers xxvii, 12, 13 "And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel. And when thou hast seen it thou also shalt be gathered unto thy people, as Aaron thy brother is gathered." Verse 15-20. "And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep that have no shepherd. And the Lord said unto Moses, take thee *Joshua*, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient."

Verses 22, 23. "And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation;

and he laid hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses."

I have nothing to do, in this place, with the truth, or the conjuration here practised, of raising up a successor to Moses like unto himself. The passage sufficiently proves it is Joshua, and that it is an imposition in John to make the case into a prophecy of Jesus. But the prophecy-mongers were so inspired with falsehood, that they never speak truth.*

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* Newton, Bishop of Bristol in England, published a work in three volumes, entitled, "Dissertations on the Prophecies." The work is tediously written and tiresome to read. He strains hard to make every passage into a prophecy that suits his purpose. Among others, he makes this expression of Moses, "The Lord shall raise thee up a prophet like unto me," into a prophecy of Christ, who was not born, according to the Bible chronologies, till fifteen hundred and fifty-two years after the time of Moses; whereas it was an immediate successor to Moses, who was then near his end, that is spoken of in the passage above quoted.

This bishop, the better to impose this passage on the world as a prophecy of Christ, has entirely omitted the account in the book of Numbers which I have given at length, word for word, and which shows, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the person spoken of by Moses is Joshua, and no other person.

Newton is but a superficial writer. He takes up things upon *hearsay*, and inserts them without either examination or reflection, and the more extraordinary and incredible they are, the better he likes them. In speaking of the walls of Babylon (vol. i, p. 263), he makes a quotation from a traveler of the name of *Tavernier*, whom he calls (by way of giving credit to what he says), *a celebrated traveler*, that those walls *were made of burnt brick, ten feet square and three feet thick.*

I pass to the last passage, in these fables of the Evangelists, called a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

John, having spoken of Jesus expiring on the cross between two thieves, says (xix, 32, 33), "Then came the soldiers and brake the legs of the first [meaning one of the thieves] and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs."

If Newton had only thought of calculating the weight of such a brick he would have seen the impossibility of their being used or even made. A brick ten feet square, and three feet thick, contains 300 cubic feet and allowing a cubic foot of brick to be only one hundred pounds, each of the bishop's bricks would weigh 30,000 pounds; and it would take about thirty cart-loads of clay (one-horse carts) to make one brick.

But his account of the stones used in the building of Solomon's temple (vol. ii, p. 211), far exceeds his bricks of ten feet square in the walls of Babylon; these are but brickbats compared to them. The stones (says he) employed in the foundation, were in magnitude forty cubits (that is above sixty feet), a cubit, says he, being somewhat more than one foot and a half (a cubit is one foot nine inches), and the superstructure (says this bishop) was worthy of such foundations.

There were some stones (says he) of the whitest marble, forty-five cubits long, five cubits high, and six cubits broad. These are the dimensions this bishop has given, which, in measure of twelve inches to a foot, is seventy-eight feet nine inches long, ten feet six inches broad, and eight feet three inches thick, and contains 7,234 cubic feet.

I now go to demonstrate the imposition of this bishop. A cubic foot of water weighs sixty-two pounds and a half. The specific gravity of marble to water is as two and one-half is to one. The weight, therefore, of a cubic foot of marble is 156

Verse 36: "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, *A bone of him shall not be broken.*"

The passage here referred to is in Exodus, and has no more to do with Jesus than with the ass he rode upon to Jerusalem; nor yet so much, if a roasted jack-ass, like a roasted he-goat, might be eaten at a Jewish passover. It might be some consolation to an

pounds, which, multiplied by 7,234, the number of cubic feet in one of those stones, makes the weight of it to be 1,128,504 pounds, which is 503 tons.

Allowing then a horse to draw about half a ton, it will require a thousand horses to draw one such stone on the ground; how then were they to be lifted into the building by human hands? The bishop may talk of faith removing mountains, but all the faith of all the bishops that ever lived could not remove one of those stones, and their bodily strength given in.

This bishop also tells of *great guns* used by the Turks at the taking of Constantinople, one of which, he says, was drawn by seventy yoke of oxen), and by two thousand men. (Vol. III, p. 117.) The weight of a cannon that carries a ball of forty-three pounds, which is the largest cannon that are cast, weighs 8,000 pounds, about three tons and a half, and may be drawn by three yoke of oxen.

Anybody may now calculate what the weight of the bishop's *great gun* must be, that required seventy yoke of oxen to draw it. This bishop beats Gulliver.

When men give up the use of the divine gift of reason in writing on any subject, be it religious or anything else, there are no bounds to their extravagance, no limit to their absurdities. The three volumes which this bishop has written on what he calls the prophecies, contain above 1,200 pages, and he says in Vol. III, p. 117, "*I have studied brevity.*" This is as marvelous as the bishop's great gun.—*Author.*

ass to know that though his bones might be picked, they would not be broken. I go to state the case.

The book of Exodus, in instituting the Jewish passover, in which they were to eat a he-lamb, or a he-goat, says (xii, 5), "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year; ye shall take it from the *sheep* or from the *goats*." The book, after stating some ceremonies to be used in killing and dressing it (for it was to be roasted, not boiled), says (verse 43-48), "And the Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner shall not eat thereof. In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh thereof abroad out of the house; *neither shall ye break a bone thereof*."

We here see that the case as it stands in Exodus is a ceremony and not a prophecy, and totally unconnected with Jesus's bones, or any part of him.

John, having thus filled up the measure of apostolic fable, concludes his book with something that beats all fable; for he says at the last verse, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they could be written everyone, *I suppose*

that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."*

This is what in vulgar life is called a *thumper;* that is, not only a lie, but a lie beyond the line of possibility; besides which it is an absurdity, for if they should be written in the world, the world would contain them. Here ends the examination of the passages called prophecies.

I have now, reader, gone through and examined all the passages which the four books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, quote from the Old Testament and call them prophecies of Jesus Christ. When I first sat down to this examination, I expected to find cause for some censure, but little did I expect to find them so utterly destitute of truth, and of all pretensions to it, as I have shown them to be.

The practise which the writers of these books employ is not more false than it is absurd. They state some trifling case of the person they call Jesus Christ, and then cut out a sentence from some passage of the Old Testament and call it a prophecy of that case. But when the words thus cut out are restored to the place they are taken from, and read with the words

* It has come to be generally admitted that the section of the book of John in which this passage appears is spurious.—*Editor.*

before and after them, they give the lie to the New Testament. A short instance or two of this will suffice for the whole.

They make Joseph to dream of an angel, who informs him that Herod is dead, and tells him to come with the child out of Egypt. They then cut out a sentence from the book of Hosea, "*Out of Egypt have I called my Son,*" and apply it as a prophecy in that case. The words, "*And called my Son out of Egypt,*" are in the Bible.

But what of that? They are only part of a passage, and not a whole passage, and stand immediately connected with other words which show they refer to the children of Israel coming out of Egypt in the time of Pharaoh, and to the idolatry they committed afterwards.

Again, they tell us that when the soldiers came to break the legs of the crucified persons, they found Jesus was already dead, and, therefore, did not break his. They then, with some alteration of the original, cut out a sentence from Exodus, "*a bone of him shall not be broken,*" and apply it as a prophecy of that case.

The words "*Neither shall ye break a bone thereof*" (for they have altered the text), are in the Bible. But what of that? They are, as in the former

case, only part of a passage, and not a whole passage, and when read with the words they are immediately joined to, show it is the bones of a he-lamb or a he-goat of which the passage speaks.

These repeated forgeries and falsifications create a well-founded suspicion that all the cases spoken of concerning the person called Jesus Christ are *made cases,* on purpose to lug in, and that very clumsily, some broken sentences from the Old Testament, and apply them as prophecies of those cases; and that so far from his being the Son of God, he did not exist even as a man—that he is merely an imaginary or allegorical character, as Apollo, Hercules, Jupiter and all the deities of antiquity were. There is no history written at the time Jesus Christ is said to have lived that speaks of the existence of such a person, even as a man.

Did we find in any other book pretending to give a system of religion, the falsehoods, falsifications, contradictions, and absurdities, which are to be met with in almost every page of the Old and New Testament, all the priests of the present day, who supposed themselves capable, would triumphantly show their skill in criticism, and cry it down as a most glaring imposition.

But since the books in question belong to their own trade and profession, they, or at least many of them, seek to stifle every inquiry into them and abuse those who have the honesty and the courage to do it.

When a book, as is the case with the Old and New Testament, is ushered into the world under the title of being the WORD OF GOD, it ought to be examined with the utmost strictness, in order to know if it has a well founded claim to that title or not, and whether we are or are not imposed upon: for no poison is so dangerous as that which poisons the physic, so no falsehood is so fatal as that which is made an article of faith.

This examination becomes more necessary, because when the New Testament was written, I might say invented, the art of printing was not known, and there were no other copies of the Old Testament than written copies. A written copy of that book would cost about as much as six hundred common printed Bibles now cost. Consequently the book was in the hands of very few persons, and these chiefly of the Church.

This gave an opportunity to the writers of the New Testament to make quotations from the Old Testament as they pleased, and call them prophecies, with very little danger of being detected. Besides which, the terrors and inquisitorial fury of the

Church, like what they tell us of the flaming sword that turned every way, stood sentry over the New Testament; and time, which brings everything else to light, has served to thicken the darkness that guards it from detection.

Were the New Testament now to appear for the first time every priest of the present day would examine it line by line, and compare the detached sentences it calls prophecies with the whole passages in the Old Testament from whence they are taken. Why then do they not make the same examination at this time, as they would make had the New Testament never appeared before?

If it be proper and right to make it in one case, it is equally proper and right to do it in the other case. Length of time can make no difference in the right to do it at any time. But, instead of doing this, they go on as their predecessors went on before them, to tell the people there are prophecies of Jesus Christ, when the truth is there are none.

They tell us that Jesus rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. It is very easy to say so; a great lie is as easily told as a little one. But if he had done so, those would have been the only circumstances respecting him that would have differed from the common lot of man; and, consequently, the only

case that would apply exclusively to him, as prophecy, would be some passage in the Old Testament that foretold such things of him.

But there is not a passage in the Old Testament that speaks of a person who, after being crucified, dead and buried, should rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven. Our prophecy-mongers supply the silence the Old Testament guards upon such things, by telling us of passages they call prophecies, and that falsely so, about Joseph's dream, old clothes, broken bones and such like trifling stuff.

In writing upon this, as upon every other subject, I speak a language full and intelligible. I deal not in hints and intimations. I have several reasons for this: First, that I may be clearly understood. Secondly, that it may be seen I am in earnest; and thirdly, because it is an affront to truth to treat falsehood with complaisance.

I will close this treatise with a subject I have already touched upon in the first part of "The Age of Reason."

The world has been amused with the term *revealed religion*, and the generality of priests apply this term to the books called the Old and New Testament. The Mahometans apply the same term to the Koran. There is no man that believes in revealed religion

stronger than I do; but it is not the reveries of the Old and New Testament, nor of the Koran, that I dignify with that sacred title. That which is revelation to me exists in something which no human mind can invent, no human hand can counterfeit or alter.

The *Word of God* is the *Creation* we behold; and this Word of God reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of his Creator. Do we want to contemplate His power? We see it in the immensity of His creation. Do we want to contemplate His wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed.

Do we want to contemplate His munificence? We see it in the abundance with which He fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate His mercy? We see it in His not withholding that abundance, even from the unthankful.

Do we want to contemplate His will, so far as it respects man? The goodness He shows to all is a lesson for our conduct to each other.

In fine—do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, or any impostor invent; but the SCRIPTURE CALLED THE CREATION.

When, in the first part of "The Age of Reason," I called the creation the true revelation of God to man,

I did not know that any other person had expressed the same idea. But I lately met with the writings of Doctor Conyers Middleton, published the beginning of last century, in which he expresses himself in the same manner, with respect to the creation, as I have done in "The Age of Reason."

He was principal librarian of the University of Cambridge, in England, which furnished him with extensive opportunities of reading, and necessarily required he should be well acquainted with the dead as well as the living languages. He was a man of a strong original mind, had the courage to think for himself, and the honesty to speak his thoughts.

He made a journey to Rome, from whence he wrote letters to show that the forms and ceremonies of the Romish Christian Church were taken from the degenerate state of the heathen mythology, as it stood in the latter times of the Greeks and Romans. He attacked without ceremony the miracles which the Church pretended to perform; and in one of his treatises, he calls the *creation a revelation.*

The priests of England, of that day, in order to defend their citadel, by first defending its out-works, attacked him for attacking the Roman ceremonies; and one of them censures him for calling the *creation a revelation.* He thus replies to him:

"One of them," says he, "appears to be scandalized by the title of *revelation* which I have given to that discovery which God made of Himself in the visible works of his creation. Yet it is no other than what the wise in all ages have given to it, who consider it as the most authentic and indisputable revelation which God has ever given of Himself, from the beginning of the world to this day.

"It was this by which the first notice of Him was revealed to the inhabitants of the earth, and by which alone it has been kept up ever since among the several nations of it. From this the reason of man was enabled to trace out his nature and attributes, and, by a gradual deduction of consequences, to learn his own nature also, with all the duties belonging to it, which relate either to God or to his fellow-creatures.

"This constitution of things was ordained by God, as an universal law, or rule of conduct to man; the source of all his knowledge; the test of all truth, by which all subsequent revelations, which are supposed to have been given by God in any other manner must be tried, and cannot be received as divine any further than as they are found to tally and coincide with this original standard.

"It was this divine law which I referred to in the passage above recited [meaning the passage on which

they had attacked him], being desirous to excite the reader's attention to it, as it would enable him to judge more freely of the argument I was handling. For by contemplating this law, he would discover the genuine way which God Himself has marked out to us for the acquisition of true knowledge, not from the authority or reports of our fellow-creatures, but from the information of the facts and material objects which, in His providential distribution of worldly things, He hath presented to the perpetual observation of our senses. For as it was from these that his existence and nature, the most important articles of all knowledge, were first discovered to man, so that grand discovery furnished new light toward tracing out the rest, and made all the inferior subjects of human knowledge more easily discoverable to us by the same method.

"I had another view likewise in the same passage, and applicable to the same end, of giving the reader a more enlarged notion of the question in dispute, who, by turning his thoughts to reflect on the works of the Creator, as they are manifested to us in this fabric of the world, could not fail to observe that they are all of them great, noble, and suitable to the majesty of His nature; carrying with them the proofs of their origin, and showing themselves to be the pro-

duction of an all-wise and Almighty being; and by accustoming his mind to these sublime reflections, he will be prepared to determine whether those miraculous interpositions, so confidently affirmed to us by the primitive fathers, can reasonably be thought to make a part in the grand scheme of the Divine administration, or whether it be agreeable that God, who created all things by His will, and can give what turn to them He pleases by the same will, should, for the particular purposes of His government and the services of the Church, *descend to the expedient of visions and revelations*, granted sometimes to boys for the instruction of the elders, and sometimes to women to settle the fashion and length of their veils, and sometimes to pastors of the Church to enjoin them to ordain one man a lecturer, another a priest; or that he should scatter a profusion of miracles around the stake of a martyr, yet all of them vain and insignificant, and without any sensible effect, either of preserving the life or easing the sufferings of the saint, or even of mortifying his persecutors, who were always left to enjoy the full triumph of their cruelty, and the poor martyr to expire in a miserable death.

"When these things, I say, are brought to the original test, and compared with the genuine and in-

disputable works of the Creator, how minute, how trifling, how contemptible must they be? And how incredible must it be thought that, for the instruction of His Church, God should employ ministers so precarious, unsatisfactory, and inadequate, as the ecstacies of women and boys, and the visions of interested priests, which were derided at the very time by men of sense to whom they were proposed.

"That this universal law [continues Middleton, meaning the law revealed in the works of the Creation] was actually revealed to the heathen world long before the Gospel was known, we learn from all the principal sages of antiquity, who made it the capital subject of their studies and writings.

"Cicero [says Middleton] has given us a short abstract of it in a fragment still remaining from one of his books on government, which [says Middleton] I shall here transcribe in his own words, as they will illustrate my sense also, in the passages that appear so dark and dangerous to my antagonist:

" 'The true law [it is Cicero who speaks], is right reason, conformable to the nature of things, constant, eternal, diffused through all, which calls us to duty by commanding, deters us from sin by forbidding; which never loses its influence with the good, nor ever preserves it with the wicked. This law cannot

be over-ruled by any other, nor abrogated in whole or in part; nor can we be absolved from it either by the senate or by the people; nor are we to seek any other comment or interpreter of it but Himself; nor can there be one law at Rome and another at Athens; one now and another hereafter; but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations at all times, under one common master and governor of all—GOD. He is the inventor, propounder, enacter of this law; and whoever will not obey it must first renounce himself, and throw off the nature of man; by doing which, he will suffer the greatest punishments though he should escape all the other torments which are commonly believed to be prepared for the wicked.' Here ends the quotation from Cicero.

"Our Doctors [continues Middleton] perhaps will look on this as RANK DEISM; but let them call it what they will, I shall ever avow and defend it as the fundamental, essential, and vital part of all true religion." Here ends the quotation from Middleton.

I have here given the reader two sublime extracts from men who lived in ages of time far remote from each other, but who thought alike. Cicero lived before the time in which they tell us Christ was born. Middleton may be called a man of our own time, as he lived within the same century with ourselves.

In Cicero we see that vast superiority of mind, that sublimity of right reasoning and justness of ideas, which man acquires, not by studying Bibles and Testaments, and the theology of schools built thereon, but by studying the Creator in the immensity and unchangeable order of His creation, and the immutability of His law.

"*There cannot,*" says Cicero, "*be one law now, and another hereafter; but the same eternal immutable law comprehends all nations, at all times, under one common Master and Governor of all*—GOD." But according to the doctrine of schools which priests have set up, we see one law, called the *Old Testament*, given in one age of the world, and another law, called the *New Testament*, given in another age of the world.

As all this is contradictory to the eternal immutable nature, and the unerring and unchangeable wisdom of God, we must be compelled to hold this doctrine to be false, and the old and the new law, called the Old and the New Testament, to be impositions, fables and forgeries.

In Middleton, we see the manly eloquence of an enlarged mind and the genuine sentiments of a true believer in his Creator. Instead of reposing his faith on books, by whatever name they may be called,

whether Old Testament or New, he fixes the creation as the great original standard by which every other thing called the word or work of God is to be tried. In this we have an indisputable scale whereby to measure every word or work imputed to Him. If the thing so imputed carries not in itself the evidence of the same Almightiness of power, of the same unerring truth and wisdom, and the same unchangeable order in all its parts, as are visibly demonstrated to our senses, and comprehensible by our reason, in the magnificent fabric of the universe, that word or that work is not of God. Let then the two books called the Old and New Testament be tried by this rule, and the result will be that the authors of them, whoever they were, will be convicted of forgery.

The invariable principles, and unchangeable order, which regulate the movements of all the parts that compose the universe, demonstrate both to our senses and our reason that its Creator is a God of unerring truth.

But the Old Testament, beside the numberless absurd and bagatelle stories it tells of God, represents Him as a God of deceit, a God not to be confided in. Ezekiel makes God to say (xiv, 9), "And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I, *the Lord have deceived that prophet.*" And at xx,

25, he makes God, in speaking of the children of Israel, to say "*Wherefore I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they should not live.*" This, so far from being the Word of God, is horrid blasphemy against Him. Reader, put thy confidence in thy God, and put no trust in the Bible.

This same Old Testament, after telling us that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, makes the same Almighty power and eternal wisdom employ itself in giving directions how a priest's garments should be cut, and what sort of stuff they should be made of, and what their offerings should be, gold and silver, and brass and blue, and purple and scarlet, and fine linen and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badger skins, etc. (xxv, 3); and in one of the pretended prophecies I have just examined, God is made to give directions how they should kill, cook and eat a he-lamb or a he-goat.

And Ezekiel (iv), to fill up the measure of abominable absurdity, makes God to order him to take *wheat and barley, and beans and lentiles, and millet and fitches, and make a loaf or a cake thereof, and bake it with human dung and eat it;* but as Ezekiel complained that this mess was too strong for his stomach, the matter was compromised from man's dung to cow-dung. Compare all this ribaldry,

blasphemously called the Word of God, with the Almighty power that created the universe, and whose eternal wisdom directs and governs all its mighty movements, and we shall be at a loss to find a name sufficiently contemptible for it.

In the promises which the Old Testament pretends that God made to His people, the same derogatory ideas of Him prevail. It makes God to promise to Abraham that his seed should be like the stars in heaven and the sand on the sea shore for multitude, and that He would give them the land of Canaan as their inheritance forever.

But observe, reader, how the performance of this promise was to begin, and then ask thine own reason, if the wisdom of God, whose power is equal to His will, could, consistently with that power and that wisdom, make such a promise.

The performance of the promise was to begin, according to that book, by four hundred years of bondage and affliction. Genesis xv, 13, "*And he said unto Abraham, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years.*"

This promise then to Abraham and his seed forever, to inherit the land of Canaan, had it been a fact instead of a fable, was to operate, in the commence-

ment of it, as a curse upon all the people and their children, and their children's children, for four hundred years.

But the case is, the book of Genesis was written after the bondage in Egypt had taken place; and in order to get rid of the disgrace of the Lord's chosen people, as they called themselves, being in bondage to the Gentiles, they make God to be the author of it, and annex it as a condition to a pretended promise; as if God, in making that promise, had exceeded His power in performing it, and consequently, His wisdom in making it, and was obliged to compromise with them for one-half, and with the Egyptians, to whom they were to be in bondage, for the other half.

Without degrading my own reason by bringing those wretched and contemptible tales into a comparative view with the Almighty power and eternal wisdom, which the Creator hath demonstrated to our senses in the creation of the universe, I will confine myself to say, that if we compare them with the divine and forcible sentiments of Cicero, the result will be that the human mind has degenerated by believing them. Man, in a state of groveling superstition from which he has not courage to rise, loses the energy of his mental powers.

I will not tire the reader with more observations on the Old Testament.

As to the New Testament, if it be brought and tried by that standard which, as Middleton wisely says, God has revealed to our senses, of His Almighty power and wisdom in the creation and government of the visible universe, it will be found equally as false, paltry, and absurd, as the Old.

Without entering, in this place, into any other argument, that the story of Christ is of human invention and not of divine origin, I will confine myself to show that it is derogatory to God by the contrivance of it; because the means it supposes God to use, are not adequate to the end to be obtained; and, therefore, are derogatory to the Almightiness of His power, and the eternity of His wisdom.

The New Testament supposes that God sent His Son upon earth to make a new covenant with man, which the Church calls *the covenant of grace;* and to instruct mankind in a new doctrine, which it calls *Faith,* meaning thereby, not faith in God, for Cicero and all true Deists always had and always will have this, but faith in the person called Jesus Christ; and that whoever had not this faith should, to use the words of the New Testament, be DAMNED.

Now, if this were a fact, it is consistent with that attribute of God called His *goodness*, that no time should be lost in letting poor unfortunate man know it; and as that goodness was united to Almighty power, and that power to Almighty wisdom, all the means existed in the hand of the Creator to make it known immediately over the whole earth, in a manner suitable to the Almightiness of His divine nature, and with evidence that would not leave man in doubt; for it is always incumbent upon us, in all cases, to believe that the Almighty always acts, not by imperfect means as imperfect man acts, but consistently with His Almightiness. It is this only that can become the infallible criterion by which we can possibly distinguish the works of God from the works of man.

Observe now, reader, how the comparison between this supposed mission of Christ, on the belief or disbelief of which they say man was to be saved or damned—observe, I say, how the comparison between this, and the Almighty power and wisdom of God demonstrated to our senses in the visible creation, goes on.

The Old Testament tells us that God created the heavens and the earth, and everything therein, in six days. The term *six days* is ridiculous enough

when applied to God; but leaving out that absurdity, it contains the idea of Almighty power acting unitedly with Almighty wisdom, to produce an immense work, that of the creation of the universe and everything therein, in a short time.

Now as the eternal salvation of man is of much greater importance than his creation, and as that salvation depends, as the New Testament tells us, on man's knowledge of and belief in the person called Jesus Christ, it necessarily follows from our belief in the goodness and justice of God, and our knowledge of His Almighty power and wisdom, as demonstrated in the creation, that ALL THIS, if true, would be made known to all parts of the world, in as little time at least, as was employed in making the world.

To suppose the Almighty would pay greater regard and attention to the creation and organization of inanimate matter, than he would to the salvation of innumerable millions of souls, which Himself had created, "*as the image of Himself,*" is to offer an insult to His goodness and His justice.

Now observe, reader, how the promulgation of this pretended salvation by a knowledge of, and a belief in Jesus Christ went on, compared with the work of creation. In the first place, it took longer time to make the child than to make the world, for

nine months were passed away and totally lost in a state of pregnancy; which is more than forty times longer time than God employed in making the world, according to the Bible account.

Secondly, several years of Christ's life were lost in a state of human infancy. But the universe was in maturity the moment it existed. Thirdly, Christ, as Luke asserts, was thirty years old before he began to preach what they call his mission. Millions of souls died in the meantime without knowing it.

Fourthly, it was above three hundred years from that time before the book called the New Testament was compiled into a written copy, before which time there was no such book. Fifthly, it was above a thousand years after that before it could be circulated; because neither Jesus nor his apostles had knowledge of, or were inspired with, the art of printing; and, consequently, as the means for making it universally known did not exist, the means were not equal to the end, and therefore it is not the work of God.

I will here subjoin the nineteenth Psalm, which is truly deistical, to show how universally and instantaneously the works of God make themselves known, compared with this pretended salvation by Jesus Christ:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

"Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a chamber for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

"His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Now, had the news of salvation by Jesus Christ been inscribed on the face of the sun and the moon, in characters that all nations would have understood, the whole earth had known it in twenty-four hours, and all nations would have believed it; whereas, though it is now almost two thousand years since, as they tell us, Christ came upon earth, not a twentieth part of the people of the earth know anything of it, and among those who do, the wiser part do not believe it.

I have now, reader, gone through all the passages called prophecies of Jesus Christ, and shown there is no such thing.

I have examined the story told of Jesus Christ, and compared the several circumstances of it with that revelation which, as Middleton wisely says, God has made to us of His power and wisdom in the structure of the universe, and by which everything ascribed to Him is to be tried.

The result is that the story of Christ has not one trait, either in its character or in the means employed, that bears the least resemblance to the power and wisdom of God, as demonstrated in the creation of the universe. All the means are human means, slow, uncertain and inadequate to the accomplishment of the end proposed; and therefore the whole is a fabulous invention, and undeserving of credit.

The priests of the present day profess to believe it. They gain their living by it, and they exclaim against something they call infidelity. I will define what it is. HE THAT BELIEVES IN THE STORY OF CHRIST IS AN INFIDEL TO GOD.

A LETTER TO ANDREW DEAN

DEAN had rented from Paine his 277-acre farm at New Rochelle, Westchester County, New York—the farm having been a gift to Paine from the State of New York. Dean had written his landlord in New York City: "I have read with good attention your manuscript on Dreams, and Examination on the Prophecies in the Bible. I am now searching the old prophecies and comparing the same to those said to be quoted in the New Testament. I confess the comparison is a matter worthy of our serious attention . . ."

Paine had given up the New Rochelle farmstead as being too solitary for his mental good, and, in addition, his pecuniary situation was causing him anxiety. He was earning nothing with his pen, and the needs of Madame Bonneville and her children, whose support and education Paine had undertaken, were increasing. Paine had lived with the Bonnevilles in Paris, and had brought the mother and two children to America. Madame Bonneville became his executrix.

RESPECTED FRIEND: I received your friendly letter, for which I am obliged to you. It is three weeks ago to-day (Sunday, August fifteenth) that I was struck with a fit of an apoplexy that deprived me of all sense and motion. I had neither pulse nor breathing, and the people about me supposed me dead. I had felt exceedingly well that day, and had just taken a slice of bread and butter for supper, and was going to bed.

The fit took me on the stairs, as suddenly as if I had been shot through the head; and I got so very much hurt by the fall that I have not been able to get in and out of bed since that day, otherwise than

being lifted out in a blanket, by two persons; yet all this while my mental faculties have remained as perfect as I ever enjoyed them.

I consider the scene I have passed through as an experiment on dying, and I find that death has no terrors for me. As to the people called Christians, they have no evidence that their religion is true. There is no more proof that the Bible is the Word of God, than that the Koran of Mahomet is the Word of God. It is education makes all the difference. Man, before he begins to think for himself, is as much the child of habits in *Creeds* as he is in plowing and sowing. Yet creeds, like opinions, prove nothing.

Where is the evidence that the person called Jesus Christ is the begotten Son of God? The case admits not of evidence either to our senses or our mental faculties; neither has God given to man any talent by which such a thing is comprehensible.

It cannot therefore be an object for faith to act upon, for faith is nothing more than an assent the mind gives to something it sees cause to believe is fact. But priests, preachers and fanatics put imagination in the place of faith, and it is the nature of the imagination to believe without evidence.

If Joseph the carpenter dreamed (as the book of Matthew (i) says he did), that his betrothed wife,

Mary, was with child by the Holy Ghost, and that an angel told him so, I am not obliged to put faith in his dreams; nor do I put any, for I put no faith in my own dreams, and I should be weak and foolish indeed to put faith in the dreams of others.

The Christian religion is derogatory to the Creator in all its articles. It puts the Creator in an inferior point of view, and places the Christian devil above him. It is he, according to the absurd story in Genesis, that outwits the Creator in the Garden of Eden, and steals from Him His favorite creature, man, and at last obliges Him to beget a son, and put that son to death, to get man back again; and this the priests of the Christian religion call redemption.

Christian authors exclaim against the practise of offering up human sacrifices, which, they say, is done in some countries; and those authors make those exclamations without ever reflecting that their own doctrine of salvation is founded on a human sacrifice. They are saved, they say, by the blood of Christ. The Christian religion begins with a dream and ends with a murder.

As I am now well enough to sit up some hours in the day, though not well enough to get up without help, I employ myself as I have always done in en-

deavoring to bring man to the right use of the reason that God has given him, and to direct his mind immediately to his Creator, and not to fanciful secondary beings called mediators, as if God was superannuated or ferocious.

As to the book called the Bible, it is blasphemy to call it the Word of God. It is a book of lies and contradictions, and a history of bad times and bad men. There are but a few good characters in the whole book. The fable of Christ and his twelve apostles, which is a parody on the sun and the twelve signs of the zodiac, copied from the ancient religions of the eastern world, is the least hurtful part.

Everything told of Christ has reference to the sun. His reported resurrection is at sunrise, and that on the first day of the week; that is, on the day anciently dedicated to the sun, and from thence called Sunday —in Latin *Dies Solis*, the day of the sun; as the next day, Monday, is Moon-day. But there is no room in a letter to explain these things.

While man keeps to the belief of one God, his reason unites with his creed. He is not shocked with contradictions and horrid stories. His Bible is the heavens and the earth. He beholds his Creator in all His works, and everything he beholds inspires him with reverence and gratitude. From the good-

ness of God to all, he learns his duty to his fellow-man, and stands self-reproved when he transgresses it. Such a man is no persecutor.

But when he multiplies his creed with imaginary things, of which he can have neither evidence nor conception, such as the tale of the Garden of Eden, the Talking Serpent, the Fall of Man, the Dreams of Joseph the Carpenter, the pretended Resurrection and Ascension, of which there is even no historical relation—for no historian of those times mentions such a thing—he gets into the pathless region of confusion, and turns either fanatic or hypocrite. He forces his mind, and pretends to believe what he does not believe. This is in general the case with the Methodists. Their religion is all creed and no morals.

I have now, my friend, given you a *facsimile* of my mind on the subject of religions and creeds, and my wish is that you make this letter as publicly known as you find opportunities of doing.

Yours, in friendship,

THOMAS PAINE.

New York, August 15, 1806.

AUTHOR'S APPENDIX

Contradictory Doctrines Between Matthew and Mark

PAINE had striven earnestly to form in New York a Society for Religious Inquiry, also, as stated elsewhere, a Society of Theophilanthropy such as he had launched in Paris. The latter was formed, and his posthumous works began to appear, shortly after his death in 1809, in the publication known as "The Theophilanthropist." But the movement was too cosmopolitan to be contained in any local organization.

"Thomas Paine," said President Andrew Jackson shortly after Paine's death, "needs no monument made by hands; he has erected a monument in the hearts of all lovers of liberty." The same may be said of his religion. Theophilanthropy, under many forms and translations, is now a fruitful branch of every Protestant religion and sect. In a remarkable tribute to Paine, his biographer, Conway, says, "The real cultivators of skepticism,—those who ascribe to deity biblical barbarism, and the savagery of nature—have had their day."

IN the New Testament (Mark xvi, 16), it is said "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is making salvation, or, in other words, the happiness of man after this life, to depend entirely on believing, or on what Christians call faith.

But *The Gospel according to Matthew* makes Jesus Christ preach a direct contrary doctrine to *The Gospel according to Mark;* for it makes salvation, or the future happiness of man, to depend entirely on *good works;* and those good works are not works done to

God, for He needs them not, but good works done to man.

The passage referred to in Matthew is the account there given of what is called the last day, or the day of judgment, where the whole world is represented to be divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, metaphorically called the *sheep* and the *goats*. To the one part called the righteous, or the sheep, it says, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

Here is nothing about believing in Christ—nothing about that phantom of the imagination called *Faith.*

The works here spoken of are works of humanity and benevolence, or, in other words, an endeavor to make God's creation happy.

Here is nothing about preaching and making long prayers, as if God must be dictated to by man; nor about building churches and meetings, nor hiring priests to pray and preach in them. Here is nothing about predestination, that lust which some men have for damning one another.

Here is nothing about baptism, whether by sprinkling or plunging, nor about any of those ceremonies for which the Christian Church has been fighting, persecuting and burning each other ever since the Christian Church began.

If it be asked why priests do not preach the doctrine contained in this chapter, the answer is easy: they are not fond of practising it themselves. It does not answer for their trade. They had rather get than give. Charity with them begins and ends at home.

Had it been said, *Come ye blessed, ye have been liberal in paying the preachers of the word, ye have contributed largely towards building churches and meeting-houses,* there is not a hired priest in Christendom but would have thundered it continually in the ears of his congregation. But as it is altogether

on good works done to men, the priests pass over it in silence, and they will abuse me for bringing it into notice.

THOMAS PAINE.

MY PRIVATE THOUGHTS ON A FUTURE STATE

THAT Thomas Paine was a profoundly religious man, however heterodoxical, is attested not only by his theological writings but by those who knew him best in his lifetime. Towards the latter part of January, 1809, he grew very feeble. On the eighteenth of that month he wrote and signed his Will, in which he reaffirms his theistic faith. In February he developed a fever, and presently symptoms of dropsy appeared. Toward the end of April he was domiciled in a house now numbered 59 Grove Street, New York, the owner of which, William A. Thompson, was once a law partner of Aaron Burr. There he died on June 8.

Apropos of the killing of Alexander Hamilton in the duel with Burr, which had recently excited the country, Paine, in commenting on Hamilton's dying words of piety and orthodoxy, observed: "The man who puts his trust and confidence in God, that leads a just and moral life, and endeavors to do good, does not trouble about priests when his hour of departure comes."

I HAVE said, in the first part of "The Age of Reason," that "*I hope for happiness after this life.*" This hope is comfortable to me, and I presume not to go beyond the comfortable idea of hope, with respect to a future state.

I consider myself in the hands of my Creator, and that He will dispose of me after this life consistently with His justice and goodness. I leave all these matters to Him, as my Creator and friend, and I hold it to be presumption in man to make an article of faith as to what the Creator will do with us hereafter. I do not believe because a man and a woman make

a child that it imposes on the Creator the unavoidable obligation of keeping the being so made in eternal existence hereafter. It is in His power to do so, or not to do so, and it is not in our power to decide which He will do.

The book called the New Testament, which I hold to be fabulous and have shown to be false, gives an account in Matthew xxv of what is there called the last day, or the day of judgment.

The whole world, according to that account, is divided into two parts, the righteous and the unrighteous, figuratively called the sheep and the goats. They are then to receive their sentence. To the one, figuratively called the sheep, it says, *"Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* To the other, figuratively called the goats, it says, *"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."*

Now the case is, the world cannot be thus divided: the moral world, like the physical world, is composed of numerous degrees of character, running imperceptibly one into the other, in such a manner that no fixed point of division can be found in either. That point is nowhere, or is everywhere.

The whole world might be divided into two parts numerically, but not as to moral character; and therefore the metaphor of dividing them, as sheep and goats can be divided, whose difference is marked by their external figure, is absurd. All sheep are still sheep; all goats are still goats; it is their physical nature to be so. But one part of the world are not all good alike, nor the other part all wicked alike. There are some exceedingly good; others exceedingly wicked.

There is another description of men who cannot be ranked with either the one or the other—they belong neither to the sheep nor the goats; and there is still another description of them who are so very insignificant, both in character and conduct, as not to be worth the trouble of damning or saving, or of raising from the dead.

My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow-mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, *will be happy hereafter;* and that the very wicked will meet with some punishment. But those who are neither good nor bad, or are too insignificant for notice, will be dropped entirely.

This is my opinion. It is consistent with my idea of God's justice, and with the reason that God has given me, and I gratefully know that He has given me a large share of that divine gift.

THOMAS PAINE.

PREDESTINATION

Remarks on Romans, ix, 18-21

Addressed to the Ministers of the Calvinistic Church

THESE are believed to have been the last remarks written by Paine before his death, June 8, 1809. The article was originally published, in 1820, in London, by Mary Ann Carlile, wife of the English publisher, Richard Carlile, who, the year before, had been fined £1,500 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment for publishing Paine's writings. His wife also was fined £500 and imprisoned two years for the same offence.

This proved to be a damaging victory for bigotry. When the Carliles came out of prison they found wealthy patrons who provided them with an establishment in Fleet Street, London, where Paine's books were thenceforth published and sold unmolested. Mrs. Carlile's petition to the House of Commons awakened that body and the whole country. Carlile had entered prison as a captive deist; when he came out the freethinkers of England were generally atheists.

PAUL, in speaking of God, says, "Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say, why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay, but who are thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"

I shall leave it to Calvinists and Universalists to wrangle about these expressions, and to oppose or

corroborate them by other passages from other books of the Old or New Testament. I shall go to the root at once, and say, that the whole passage is presumption and nonsense.

Presumption, because it pretends to know the private mind of God: and nonsense, because the cases it states as parallel cases have no parallel in them, and are opposite cases.

The first expression says, "Therefore hath He (God) mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth." As this is ascribing to the attribute of God's power at the expense of the attribute of His justice, I, as a believer in the justice of God, disbelieve the assertion of Paul. The Predestinarians, of which the loquacious Paul was one, appear to acknowledge but one attribute in God, that of *power*, which may not improperly be called the *physical attribute*. The Deists, in addition to this, believe in His moral attributes, those of justice and goodness.

In the next verses, Paul gets himself into what in vulgar life is called a hobble, and he tries to get out of it by nonsense and sophistry; for having committed himself by saying that "God hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth," he felt the difficulty he was in, and the

objections that would be made, which he anticipates by saying, "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He (God) yet find fault? for who hath resisted His will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou, that repliest against God!"

This is neither answering the question, nor explaining the case. It is downright quibbling and shuffling off the question, and the proper retort upon him would have been, "Nay, but who art thou, presumptuous Paul, that puttest thyself in God's place?"

Paul, however, goes on and says, "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" Yes, if the thing felt itself hurt, and could speak, it would say it. But as pots and pans have not the faculty of speech, the supposition of such things speaking is putting nonsense in the place of argument, and is too ridiculous even to admit of apology. It shows to what wretched shifts sophistry will resort.

Paul, however, dashes on, and the more he tries to reason the more he involves himself, and the more ridiculous he appears. "Hath not," says he, "the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?"

In this metaphor, and a most wretched one it is, Paul makes the potter to represent God; the lump of

clay the whole human race; the vessels unto honor those souls "on whom He hath mercy because He will have mercy"; and the vessels unto dishonor, those souls "whom He hardeneth (for damnation) because He will harden them." The metaphor is false in everyone of its points, and if it admits of any meaning or conclusion, it is the reverse of what Paul intended and the Calvinists understand.

In the first place, a potter doth not, because he cannot, make vessels of different qualities, from the same lump of clay; he cannot make a fine china bowl, intended to ornament a sideboard, from the same lump of clay that he makes a coarse pan, intended for a close-stool. The potter selects his clays for different uses, according to their different qualities, and degrees of fineness and goodness.

Paul might as well talk of making gun-flints from the same stick of wood of which the gunstock is made, as of making china bowls from the same lump of clay of which are made common earthen pots and pans.

Paul could not have hit upon a more unfortunate metaphor for his purpose, than this of the potter and the clay; for if any inference is to follow from it, it is that as the potter selects his clay for different kinds of vessels according to the different qualities and degrees of fineness and goodness in the clay, so God

selects for future happiness those among mankind who excel in purity and good life, which is the reverse of predestination.

In the second place there is no comparison between the souls of men and vessels made of clay; and, therefore, to put one to represent the other is a false position. The vessels, or the clay they are made from, are insensible of honor or dishonor. They neither suffer nor enjoy. The clay is not punished that serves the purpose of a close-stool, nor is the finer sort rendered happy that is made up into a punch-bowl.

The potter violates no principle of justice in the different uses to which he puts his different clays; for he selects as an artist, not as a moral judge; and the materials he works upon know nothing, and feel nothing, of his mercy or his wrath. Mercy or wrath would make a potter appear ridiculous, when bestowed upon his clay. He might kick some of his pots to pieces.

But the case is quite different with man, either in this world or the next. He is a being sensible of misery as well as of happiness, and therefore Paul argues like an unfeeling idiot when he compares man to clay on a potter's wheel, or to vessels made therefrom: and with respect to God, it is an offense to His attributes of justice, goodness and wisdom to suppose that He would treat the choicest work of creation like

inanimate and insensible clay. If Paul believed that God made man after His own image, he dishonors it by making that image and a brickbat to be alike.

The absurd and impious doctrine of predestination, a doctrine destructive of morals, would never have been thought of had it not been for some stupid passages in the Bible, which priestcraft at first, and ignorance since, have imposed upon mankind as revelation.

Nonsense ought to be treated as nonsense wherever it be found; and had this been done in the rational manner it ought to be done, instead of intimating and mincing the matter, as has been too much the case, the nonsense and false doctrine of the Bible, with all the aid that priestcraft can give, could never have stood their ground against the divine reason that God has given to man.

Doctor Franklin gives a remarkable instance of the truth of this in an account of his life, written by himself. He was in London at the time of which he speaks. "Some volumes," says he, "against Deism, fell into my hands. They were said to be the substance of sermons preached at Boyle's lectures.

"It happened that they produced on me an effect precisely the reverse of what was intended by the writers; for the arguments of the Deists, which were

cited in order to be refuted, appeared to me more forcible than the refutation itself. In a word I soon became a perfect Deist."—New York edition of Franklin's Life, page 93.

All America, and more than all America, knows Franklin. His life was devoted to the good and improvement of man. Let, then, those who profess a different creed, imitate his virtues, and excel him if they can.

THOMAS PAINE.